



Since being here, since I was homeless on the outs, I have grown quite attached to this institution and its staff members. On the outs (freedom), I was unsure whether or not I would get a meal or a place to sleep. Here I get both. If you take advantage of the Juvenile Hall, I believe you can go far.

check out the rest of Dominic's POW on page 8

Welcome back faithful Beat readers, it seems like yesterday we were completing last week's 11.18 editorial note for your reading pleasure. Well tiem is sure flying, and we can only hope you are satisfied. If not, well, get up and do something with that life of yours!

OK, the ramble begins, here we are starting issue 11.19's editorial. Can you believe eleven years of being a weekly! E-L-E-V-E-N! It's all too much. If you do not know The Beat Within is truly relentless when it comes to workshops and the editing and the laying out of our two publications. As most of you know, once we complete one issue we start the next. No time for a break, OK maybe a coffee break and a dog walk. Seriously, just think if we had a few more solid editors, just maybe we could write a few more letters, write a few more proposals, meet a few more key people who may/could open a door or two for this gem of a program. Regardless this editor wouldn't change a damn thing when it comes to the journey of The Beat Within. What a ride we've all been on, and if you haven't jumped on yet, well, get on board, be apart of history in the making, and the more you keep it real the better!

A quick update on The Beat Within program, conversations have started with the system folks from Sacramento, Los Angeles, Yolo and Monterey County who are expressing an interest in having The Beat Within publication and our weekly program in their facilities. Also, our old friends from Natural Bridge in the state of Virginia reached out to us the other day informing us that they want to restart The Beat Within in their facility. With that said, we know things like this (implementing our program) will take a few minutes before they are in place. Baby steps. There is lots of red-tape as many of you know before such a program is implemented. We know The Beat Within may appear too simple to replicate, but it's the power behind the words that worries the not so open-minded. So, right now we are thrilled to have such a conversation going. We'll keep you posted.

Allow us to get right to business with the topics that were address prior to the writing in this workshop, given we do want to speak on the topics and the writings found in this week's mighty issue of writing and art from the inside.

The first topic is, the not too popular of a topic, "A Young Bullet" - We all know bullets have to be created, distributed, and stored until they're finally shot - or not... But once they're shot that's the end for them - just like it might be the end for the person being shot at.

What we want you to do this week is to imagine yourself as a bullet. Tell us a story about where you've been - from the mineral deposits you came from, to the factories that made you, to the hands you pass through. We don't want names of people you might enter as a bullet, or anything else that involves haterism. But we would like for you to take us on a journey through life as a bullet. If you're up for the task, blast away!

Our second topic, the poetic and at times touching, "Looking Out My Window" - It could be your cell window, the car window, your bedroom window, to your work window, shoot, it could be any window. We want to know... When you look out the window what do you see?

Lastly, the most popular writing topic of the week, "What Exactly Do You Miss About Home?" - Is it things in your home? Your loved ones? Your bed? Sleeping until late night? Your TV, radio, phone? Food? What?

And this is what we want to touch on... We have to say, how dare you incarcerated readers throw away a good thing, even if it's short term? For most of us home is where all the love is. Home is where mom is. Home is where we feel the safest. Home is home. Home is where the children play, laugh and sing. Home is where you can be you. Home is where you can relax, take long showers, sit at the kitchen table and flip through a magazine, while blasting your favorite CD from the living room, while munching on chips and a soda. Shoot you know the saying, "Home Sweet Home," and that it is. Most of us can't wait to leave work to go home, we all long for home and here too many of you young ones sit allowing the system to dictate when if ever again you go home. How could you take home for granted? How could you make such a poor choice and hurt your mom, hurt your brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, grandmas and grandpas? You disrespected yourself and your family and the place you call home. Now you've created not only for you but those who care for you a new dilemma, and whatever that dilemma maybe, it's taking it's toll on the ones you love too. And now you want to return home, the way it use to be, well, we have news for you it will never be the same.

Sure in most of the pieces in this issue, you all long for the most simple things home can provide, yet, like we said, you made a poor choice and so you sit minus the love, minus your young brothers and sisters, minus your mom, minus your bedroom, minus a home cook meal, minus your clothes, minus your time to do as you please. Shoot, the list goes on and on!

We need to ask you honest readers of this editorial note, where did it truly go wrong for you to forfeit your priceless freedom, your home? What's broken? Can it be fixed?

Of course a number of you probably do not have a safe loving house, so your hands were forced to look to the streets for guidance and love, and in truth that breaks our hearts, because the odds are greater that you might fall again and again. We do believe if you want a better life you do have a say in creating a better living environment outside of the correctional system and the old home life/lifestyle you left from.

From this week's topics you serious writers shed plenty of light in this issue, and we can only hope the powers that be can and will embrace this week's publication and use it as a tool to help improve this already dysfunctional correctional system, by getting your words into the ears, minds and hearts of the policy makers and people with power who will then understand there is so much more to you than the alleged crime you committed. In an ideal world wouldn't it be beautiful if the elite powers of our communities truly listened to us writers/us teachers of The Beat Within!

Of course we can bet on it that your voice and this publication will be liked by few and treated like Rodney Dangerfield by many others. Well, since The Beat Within has been a weekly publication and program for well over ten years we have seen what our work has done for many of you readers inside and out. We see how writing and being published has given many hope that there is a better way to lead one's life. We see through this publication, how empowering you teachers and storytellers are, and how it makes you/us all want to reach out even more. We all need a little respect, don't we?

Well we at The Beat Within pride ourselves in listening and most of you writers have truly burned our ears with some of the most powerful and thoughtful compositions, poems, raps, stories we have ever, ever read in our entire lives. We thank you for opening up through us, admitting your mistakes, peeling off your masks and helping break the stereotype(s) that have been so easily placed on you. Keep writing! Never give up on self no matter how dark it seems. We must have faith that we all will return to our old homes or to a new home, as we start the next chapters of our lives out side of corrections. It can be done. Have faith.

There is still time to participate in our latest editorial note contest. Yes indeed this contest is coming to a close, but we still encourage your thoughts on the contest question, which is, "Turning Back the Hands Of Time." Tell us if you could turn back the hands of time would you? How far back would you go? What would you change? How would your life have turned out differently? Sure you could also tell us that you would not turn the hands back, but tell us why is that? Turning back the hands of time is a phrase we have heard time and time again, so tell us your take on it. Share your story, share your thoughts. If you had such power to rid the pains that have brought you to such a place would you turn the hands of time back?

Like we said, this contest is open to all Beat writers. All submissions need to be in by the end of May, 2006. We will always honor pieces that come in up to a week or so late. The First-place writer will receive a one-hundred dollar money order. Second place receives fifty-dollars, and third and fourth place will receive twenty-five dollars each. Best of luck writers, in telling us your written story/poem that relates to turning back the hands of time.

Before we call it an editorial note, lets congratulate our latest POW winners! From the 150 Crew: Bianca (has 2), Drew, Dooda, Lil' Toot, and Britoria. From SF/YGC: KK, David, Travieso, and Mono. From Marin: Dominic, Santa Cruz: Colorblind, and Walden House: Clover.

All right, this editorial note goes out to our friend Dominic who also goes by Scorpion, over in Marin County Juvenile Hall who has touched many of us this past year through his powerful writing/poetry. This week he gives us readers a dose of life inside Marin County Juvenile Hall. We are so honored to be such an outlet for him and all you readers who take this work and your life seriously.

We will see you sooner than you can blink and eye, or so it seems. Thanks.

T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Literacy For Youth

From The Beat: We love when our good friend, 150 Librarycal Librarian, Amy Cheney sends us her pieces to print in The Beat Within, or allows us through her speaking program to come and speak to the young people in the hall, minus The Beat writing workshops. And this week, as you will soon read is her latest contribution to this magnificent publication, when she gives us all a taste of author, Ron Glodoski's book and his visit to the Hall. Oh by the way, The Beat will be returning to speak to a couple units on June 14, 2006, and maybe Amy will write about this engagement as well.

Ron Glodoski's Visit to ISO

Ron Glodoski, author of "How to Be a Successful Criminal: the Real Deal on Crime, Drugs and Easy Money" came to talk to youth at Alameda County Library at the Juvenile Hall.

He spoke about his journey; what got him into juvie halls and a life of crime. Physical, sexual and verbal abuse lead him to believing what people said about him and how he was worthy of being treated. Then he started acting as if what they said were true. Ron started not caring and then went straight to using drugs, alcohol and violence to numb the pain. He became addicted to all. Fortunately he made it through and now he is 20 years clean and sober and can walk on the streets with a light heart. He also figured out how to use the skills he learned on the streets as a drug lord and gang leader to create a legitimate business making millions of dollars. (Read about his story in his book, mentioned above).

Ron lead youth in a writing exercise about name calling. Here are the names that dads, moms, brothers, sisters, so-called "friends," teachers, grandparents, school principals, counselors and others called youth when they were 5, 6, 7 etc years old: Stupid, cry baby, punk, stupid ass ninja, retarded, peanut head, wuss, mark, faggot, ho, square, slut, tramp, lazy shhh, loudmouth, ugly, retarded, knuckle head, lazy, curly head, fatty, dirty Mexican, animal, pig, dumb, loser, ignorant, screw up, white washed, opinionated, crack baby, square, dirty, pest. I left out all the mean racial and sexual ways that youth were put down by these same people.

Lots of youth remembered the first time someone called them a name. They remembered what was said, who said it and what they were wearing.

The first time someone called me a name:

- It was my Dad. I was three years old and he was at home on the weekend. He called me a stupid ass. He was wearing an undershirt.
- My sister called me fatty. She was wearing her polka dot pajamas and was in my room.
- I was 8 years old, that I remembered. It was mom, and she was dressed in a dress at my house and she called me a ef-ing animal.
- I was 4-5 years old at the kitchen table. My dad was wearing pyjamas and called me useless.
- I was 4 years old and someone teased me the very first time, they called me stupid and ugly in my room. They were wearing overalls and sandals and it was my brothers.
- My teacher called me lazy.

Most of youth wrote that they were called names everyday, mostly at home or at recess.

How did they feel? They wrote that they felt: numb and ignored. I felt sad and depressed. I felt angry. I felt upset. I felt fed up. It made me feel like I ain't s**t. It hurt my feelings, It hurt me on the inside. Them names I was called made me feel so mad, and I believed it and I went and socked someone. The names made me feel real bad at the time. I felt it was untrue and it made me want to beat them. It made me feel like I didn't belong at home. It made me want to get back at them. I would just never believe them. I didn't believe anything or anyone. It made me feel like a punk, the lowest thing in the world. I really thought I was.

What did youth do about it? Youth cried. Youth tried to ignore it. Youth acted like it didn't hurt. Even if it hurts youth didn't let it show. A lot of youth wrote that they were so angry, sad and hurt that they hit people, looked for a gun, etc:

I ignored them or spoke up for myself. I'd slap, hit with 2 x4, shoot him, stab him, take off. I kicked their ass to fight them. I don't call them nothing, I'll murder them.

How did the name calling impact youth? Youth wrote:

- Today this effects my motivation.
- It gave me less confidence in myself.
- I don't feel like I'm good enough.
- It seems true about being stupid now because I came to jail.
- I was called names everywhere, everyday. Those names made me numb to everything and everyone.

Last year youth had time to write about the real you. Here is what they wrote that is REAL:

I AM:

Creative, wise, intelligent, brave, talented, bright, artistic, a good reader, a good writer, good listener, fast learner, good artist, good at math, bright, kind hearted, special, unique, strong, kind, smart, nice, thankful, understanding beautiful, athletic, talented.

Youth heard about more books and were encouraged at the end of the program to read books that support who they REALLY ARE.

-Amy Cheney, The Librarycal Librarian
Write to Read
Alameda County Library
Juvenile Hall Literacy

That Was Then

It's hard to let the people you love go because of your own insecurities

Yet it's so hard to resist

When you wish you could have more

Makes you wanna break free

I need stability

I know I'm stronger than this

But right now I feel so weak

There's got to be a better way to deal with my feelings

Why did I have to fall in love?

I wonder

So instead I wrap my love in chains

Praying God will keep 'em from coming undone

Careful not to become too attached to something I

might need to let go of

Sometimes I feel as if I'm not sure

While you are on the phone I listen with pain in my heart

Am I right to stay and pray it will stop?

Or should I leave before it hurts anymore?

That was my question.

But if I had to question our relationship

Why didn't I let go sooner?

Yet I stayed and endured, and when I got that feeling

inside, your presence made me realize

it didn't really matter.

'Cause I didn't realize it didn't really matter.

'Cause I didn't mind drinking tears for water.

And I continued to do anything and everything for you

And I continued to ignore what the walls were saying

But I was silly, running from the truth,

that showed me who you really are.

When the fact of the matter is things are as they are

And I can no longer ignore it

That's what you chose and I can't change that!

Nope, so I put my foot down.

And let go slowly closing that chapter in my past

hoping the next will be new and exciting.

-Bianca, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, you use a lot of strong imagery in this piece—impressive. Relationships are never easy—whether they be friendships, family or romances, they take a lot of energy and can often hurt just so much. The hardest thing can be coming to terms with a relationship ending, but just like you say, it often means opening a new and exciting chapter. Good luck!

I Hate

I hate every single face I see

Everyone sitting next to me

Every face staring back at me

I hate the way they pretend

Until they think they've gotten in

And then all the pretending ends

And the comfort, laziness, and lake of foresight begins

I hate the way they look

Acting important

I hate that they know nothing at all

And act as if they know it all

I hate the way I despise the look in their eyes

I hate how my heart cries and I have no one to tell

I hate them standing next to me shadowing my every move

I hate the way their voices sound

I hate the way they trail me to every place

I hate taking up my space

I hate all these thoughts in my head I don't wanna die

I hate feeling dead

I hate all the things that end up being unsaid

I'm exhausted but I can't sleep

I hate feeling this hate so deep

I just wanna smile

But I hate being fake

Feeling like I'm about to break

I hate people that see me as a cake

Try to cake up on me now that is a mistake

-Bianca, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a really powerful piece. We're sorry you feel so much hate because we know how mind states like these take a toll on people's spirits. Is there a way for you to find something that makes you feel love too?

The Road Of Life

The road of life that you are born on is set up for you to fail. It's up to you to overcome the different obstacles or do something smarter and learn how to avoid those obstacles before you encounter them. Learn a way to go around or work your way to go around or work your way over the ditch that has been dug for you to fall in before it's too late and you have to figure a way out of hole you've fallen in.

It's up to you alone to figure out how to avoid the hole in the road so you can reach your destination. Success, you may get some assistance but they can only go with you so far before they must take their separate route for life has many detours for those with different goals have different paths to walk before they reach their destination.

-KK B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The things you're saying in this piece are very wise. Do you live by your own advice or are you more of a 'practice what I preach, not what I do' kind of person? Hopefully it's the former, we're so tired of the latter. We think that the road your born on is a set up for either failure or success, depending on the circumstances of your birth. Some babies are born with all the advantages for success, and therefore have a far greater advantage in life than other babies born with the kind of traps in their path that you've described. It's very unfair, since children don't have any control over their circumstances, but that's the way it is. So your advice is all the more important. Thanks for writing this.

Looking Out The Window

Usually when I look out the window I picture myself being there. When I see a car go by I picture myself in that car going to places. But to talk about the window in my cell, I look out through that window. I can picture all of the things I can be doing instead of locked inside.

I see the sky symbolizing freedom, which I desperately want. I see flowers and grass which I can be stepping on or picking for the fun of it. However I'm stuck here hopeless trying to fantasize things happening but can't really do it in real life... when I look out the window all I see are regrets. Why did I do it? Why did I get involved? I kept on asking the same question. The window won't give me a answer nor the chance. It's like a thing that separates one from the outside world.

For a matter of fact I want to break that window so I can gain my regular life back. But things aren't that simple sometimes. In fact this window is just a piece of glass. It shouldn't be a wall but it does give you a sense of diminishment. You can see but you can't touch

-David B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We think that this piece is exactly what the person that created the topic had in mind for how a piece should be written about this idea. Does being able to see and not touch make you want to do what's necessary to never come back to jail again? If not, what will it take? If yes, what's your plan?

A Speeding Bullet

Moved to the city of San Francisco
I passed through so many hands,
It's incredible.
Labeled as a slug on a street
Passing through so many young Latin hands,
Like if it was nothing
Not realizing what they were really doing
Put into a barrel and never seein' daylight again.
Just voices of two people
Wind blowing
All pitch black
Out of nowhere a force exploded behind me
I increased to an amazing speed
People yelling and running around me
A blur of everything
Flying down the street
A glass window stopped me dead in my tracks
To realize a bus
I seen brown eyes,
A bald head and a scared face

-Travieso B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a truly a wonderful poem, Travieso. We understand you to be writing from the point of view of a bullet, and we love how you've tapped into our senses to make us feel what's happening ("Passing through so many Latin hands..." — "Wind blowing..." — "A blur of everything...") Is this strictly from your imagination, or are you remembering a specific time and place?

Looking For A Topic

Today I couldn't think of a topic to write about. (I didn't want to write about the ones on the sheet.) So me and The Beat guy started talking...

And you know what doesn't make sense to me is that Mexicans can say Brown Pride, African Americans can say Black Pride, but if a White person says White Pride — he's suddenly a racist. Does that make sense to you? But if a Mexican or an African American says that they are proud of their skin color, then they are just proud. Another thing — there're groups devoted to Black Power and Brown Pride and they are not hated on by society. But any group of Whites devoted to being proud of their skin color is racist. I think this is because of the way society is run today. It's almost like since White people were in control for so long, people think we should be singled out. That's hypocritical, and racist.

So if you are of color and you single out the White person at any time, think about if you were the only person of color in a bunch of White people. And if that's not odd feeling enough, imagine that on top of that they were all making fun of your skin color. How would you feel? Just think about it. I'm out.

-Colorblind, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You raise important issues here. Some people think that the issue of race may be the single biggest issue we Americans face. And yet science tells us that skin color is a question of melanin. Some humans have more than others, but everything beneath the skin is pretty much the same, no matter where one comes from. It boils down to this: prejudice, based on skin color, or the color of one's eyes, or the color of one's hair, or whether one is left handed, or gay, or any other number of distinguishing but unimportant characteristics that we have as individuals, is ignorant. That African-Americans, or other people of color, who have suffered because of a pervasive racism in America, should react by celebrating their 'otherness' is understandable. What we all need to work toward is an America where one's behavior, not one's skin color, becomes the measure of our contribution to society. All human beings are capable of a wide range of behavior. We believe that it's better to be kind and loving and generous than to be mean, hateful or stingy. Race matters in America primarily because not all of us have equal opportunities to become our best selves. We wish it were true that no child is being left behind in today's America. The truth is, millions of children are being left behind. Look around you. Is it just a coincidence that the greatest majority of kids in the hall are not from middle or upper income families? Think about that, and think some more. And if you're of the opinion that we've avoided your question — well, here's our answer: racism is wrong, wherever it comes from. Period.

I Remember

I remember...
I remember the start, the finish.
The beginning, the end
I remember the abuse and the hurt within
I remember the good and the bad
I remember the bar and the bat.
I remember the sound of my scream and the hurt in my cry.
I remember...
I remember the love and the hate
I remember the smile on your face
I remember your foot and fist
I remember the places you missed
I remember the blood and the bruises
I remember all your accuses
I remember all your sorrys
I remember all your words
I remember ...
I remember your laugh and your smile
I remember the carnivals, festivals and the places we went to
I remember our first kiss
I also remember our last
I remember the love that I thought would be eternity
But most importantly,
I remember the day I couldn't remember no more

-Clover, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: Wow, Clover, you pack a lot of information into this very fine, but very sad poem. We don't think that boys who hit girls can be described as anything but boys. They aren't men, no matter what age they may be. It's easy to hit someone weaker than us, and it shows more about that person than, perhaps, we want to know. We're glad there's been a "last kiss" between you, because we know there are men (not boys) out there who will respect you, which is the very least you deserve. Don't settle for anything less.

I'm not saying it's easy to succeed in life, to do right when you're surrounded by wrong — 'cause it ain't! You just got to know what time it is and step ya game up in life (in positive ways)

Dreams Still Can Come True (A Reflection)

When I first came to the Hall and my PO told me the deal with my case, I thought my life was coming to an end. I threw out all the hopes and dreams I once had looked forward to, out of my head!

But as I look at myself now, I've come to realize that this situation I'm in, has actually bettered my hopes and dreams. I know some readers may be like, "What the hell?!" Yet, all I'm tryin' to say is — never give up in life! In life, you might feel like you're at the bottom of the barrel, but the only way to the top is by not givin' up — keep on pressin' your way back to the top!

As of now, I'm a high school grad, and I am planning on furthering my education. When I came in, I had under 70 credits (63, to be exact). Now I'm not saying it's easy to succeed in life, to do right when you're surrounded by wrong — 'cause it ain't! You just got to know what time it is and step ya game up in life (in positive ways), 'cause only you can put in the effort to make a positive change in ya life. Do you want to live right?

-Drew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is amazing, but in the time you've been incarcerated in Alameda County Juvenile Hall, you've actually become a role model, not only to your own younger siblings, but to each and every reader of The Beat Within, (as they say in the Gospel —) with ears to hear and eyes to see. There will always be some who answer you last question in the negative, but for those who answer in the positive, yes, you are an inspiration!

To My Baby Sister (RIP)

This is to my baby sister:

I remember you so happy and peaceful at times. I had to put your pictures up 'cause to look at you I get depressed. Looking at me and you, happy together on Nov 8, 2004 before I came to the Hall. You coming to aunts house all happy...

Now sister, I'm missing you like crazy, you was my whole life -

my baby. Now you just a baby in this picture. I love you like I don't know. Like when that bullet flew and hit Daemar in his chest and me and him staying there. I'm sitting down by his body as he lay dead with two nickels in his hand. Before - layin' there telling me don't grow like him.

Mama crack-out the day she got killed in front of all three of us. When Mike choked her and threw her on the flo'. As I lay here and look at your picture at 6:50, May, 2nd, 2006. Ms. P told me to put all my pictures away 'cause all I do is cry over you.

Losing you was the worst thing in my life. You, Mama, Daemar, now Granny. Times are hard, now I'm here all by myself. Now daddy has a son. Yeah he's 9 or 10, his nickname is Popa. Wow, I want to get him away from daddy. I talked to Popa yesterday. Ms. Wadud from the Hall got me through. Daddy just got out the pen.

Man, sis, times are hard now. I'm losing my mind. Sis, now all I have left really, is Brittini. Don't you remember Brittini. She was daddy's second daughter. Daddy's a fool. I use to want to be just like him. Now I can't stand him. Now I just stare at you like a psychopath, shedding tears.

But now it's light-weight easy. Sis, I love you. I'm about to end this soon. Love you always, hopefully I'll see you on the crossroad. I thank you for my nickname Dooda. Love you Muky, my Tweety.

Love always,

Your big brother Taj'hikee aka...

-Dooda, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Dooda, you've suffered some big losses in your lifetime. It's very easy to feel depressed when you've suffered so much loss. Instead of feeling depressed about these deaths, celebrate their lives. Take pleasure in all the memories that you've created with them. Your life will continue - and your memories of them follow. We hope that these words reach your sister, RIP. God bless.

In Long Memory Of Ron Ezz

He was like my cousin. When I was young he would be in my cousin's room hanging out. I liked to be around him because he was hella funny. He was a skinny ninja wit long dreads. I remember when he used to shake them. He was coo.

I remember I would always see him when I was comin' from school when I was in junior high. He would be working at the Berkeley Bowl. We would chop it up for a minute. The last time I saw him was the day I had a basketball game. I yelled "Ron Ezz" and he yelled back, "What's up Lil' Toot." He was in the stands.

A couple of days later I was walking down the street when my cousin came up and to told me Ronnie got killed last night. I didn't believe it until everyone started telling me. I went to class and just thought about how young he was and wondered what coward ninjas got my ninja. I broke down in tears just from the thought while in class.

When his funeral came there were hella people there. You couldn't even sit down 'cause it was so crowded. When it was time to view the body I walked by and took a quick look because I was scared to see that he was really gone. But I didn't feel right so I went around again, this time with my mother. I stared at his body and all the sorrow hit me. I cried and kissed him on his cheek; his face was really cold. I sat down and my momma was by my side to comfort me. I cried and cried thinking to myself that this was so messed up. He was only 19-years old and his life was stolen by some coward. I love you my ninja and I'll see you again one day but until then rest in peace Ron Ezz. You will always be remembered - God bless your soul.

-Lil' Toot, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know this probably wasn't easy to write or share so thank you for doing so. Your words tell us the kind of impact Ron had on you and so many other people. Death has an incredible ripple effect - the loss of one man or woman has an effect on countless lives from the people that knew him or her on a casual basis to the people who loved him or her most. It's like when a person gets locked up - it's not just the person that has gone to jail that suffers it's also their family and loved ones too. Strange when you see someone for the last time but you don't know it. If anything it is a reminder that we don't know how long we are going to be here and we should make the most of the time we have. We know that you are very serious about making some changes in your life and we hope that when you think about Ron's life and how it was cut short you will work even harder to do what you need to do.

I cried and cried thinking to myself that this was so messed up. He was only 19-years old and his life was stolen by some coward.

My Cell Window

When I look out my cell window I see freedom. I see everything that I'm missing out on. I can actually see the fresh air pass by my room hittin' the bushes pushing them down 'cause the breeze is hittin' hard.

I think to myself, "Forget the bushes. I want the breeze to hit me." It makes me think about all the people out there livin' life to the fullest without takin' orders from anybody like we do. The only time we get to taste that breeze is when we go outside to play, and that's only for a limited time.

I get to see the birds fly by but I don't get to hear them sing or chirp. I see the clouds up in the sky and trip off now how high they is, then I think to myself I could be higher than that sittin' in my shed, smoking hot boxin' a blunt to the face.

-Mono B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Freedom is lovely, but we'd hate to see you fall victim to the belief that once free, everything will be all right. We agree with most of the things you've said, except for the fact that people out here don't take orders. No matter where you go in life, you have to answer to somebody. Just not in the same capacity as you are now. That should tell you something about your extraordinary survival skills.

My Love

I can change if I wanted to.

Despising my past

it holds no grudges on my heart.

I live day by day,

wondering how I am going to get out this situation.

I pray,

I have personal conversations with myself.

I even look at my beautiful self from time to time.

I mean all the time but when I look sometimes I really think

I see good in me,

I see that my inner life needs improvement.

I never said that I was perfect,

that's why I have no problem with dealing with my consequences.

I was much younger and dreaming and fantasizing fairytales.

But now I am much more mature and I can see...I am closer to my dreams.

Love you brother unconditionally.

-Britoria, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know there's good in you, and plenty of it. The important thing is that you see it for yourself, so we're glad you do.

A Day In The Life Of A Prisoner

I woke up this morning in the East Hallway, otherwise known as the long hallway because of the length compared to others. I opened my eyes and a yellow light atop my ceiling greeted me with a bright stare. The lights in my hallway don't go off and they don't get any dimmer. I rolled myself off of the bed with a slight groan, my back complained by cracking in several different places like firecrackers. The culprit, a three and a half inch mattress, dark green in color and made by company and game show host "Bob Barker." The sun shining through my window is warped by glass and no warmth given. The only warmth I receive is from three paper-thin "Bob Barker" blankets and my imagination. An overhead air conditioner drones 24/7 slicing the silence and gnawing at nerves when attentive. Overall - my room is not the most pleasant. Plus mornings are always dismal.

My bladder was pulsing uncomfortably so I slipped on my "Bob Barker" sandals (he is everywhere), and crossed the room to my own private buzzer. Like a doorbell, when pressed, a speaker on the ceiling becomes an intercom and expressing your needs is as easy as talking into a hole in the wall.

After a few seconds, a scratchy voice breaks the silence. "What?" I need to go to the bathroom. "Hold on." After about a minute, my door swung open and I hurried down the hall. Afterwards, I walked back into my "house" and waited on my bed with thoughts of freedom on my mind, for the clang of keys and directions for the morning.

"Get up, get up, sweep and mop your rooms, brush your teeth and make your beds! Get up, get up . . ."

Throwing my towel around my neck and stretching, I shuffled my morning shuffle down to the rack of "Bob Barker" toothbrushes, about faced, and walked into the bathroom. Four sinks, bolted to the wall, provide about seven toothbrushes and water for our pearly whites. Once done, I wiped my mouth and threw the towel into a bin of dirty laundry and grabbed a broom and mop and trudged back to my room, thoughts of freedom sliding down inside the inside of my skull.

After mopping and sweeping my room, I wait with book in my hand, for that same rattle of keys that always gets my stomach growling, "Breakfast." After unlocking my door, I stand and watch staff gravitate from door to door. The beauty of temporary freedom always makes me smile. We walk in a single file line to the unit and have a seat. Girls are on one side and boys are on the other. After Probation Officer requests and medical call, trays are passed out to those who lost points and those who can't go to dining hall to eat. We line up again, hands behind our backs, and walk to the dining hall to eat breakfast.

After we eat breakfast, I notice that my pant leg is loose. Upon further examination, I realize that the elastic from the bottom is gone. Great, I think, another reason for staff to complain!

We end up watching a movie that I've already seen for about twenty minutes, at which time the guys ogle the forbidden fruit that is the opposite sex. After the movie gets going, staff turns it off and we go to school. Since I am graduating pretty soon, I go to the back of the classroom and do my own thing until school is over. (Pardon me if I don't have the exact time, but after a few months, I can tell when things are, just by my own body so you'll just have to trust me.)

After the first half of school is over, we go outside for PE. Depending on the day or the staff, we will either exercise or go into free play. In either case, the fresh air is soothing yet frustrating at the same time. I'm glad I'm outside, but when I look at the mountains that are a stone's throw away, yet unreachable, it's maddening. Usually I sit by myself and reminisce on old times and past events, loves lost and future loves to come, but after all is the thought and re-thought, I am still in Juvenile Hall.

After PE, we come back to the unit also known as the common room to older adults (redundant, I know), and wait for lunch to arrive. We change out of our shoes and back into our sandals and most everyone puts on a few pumps of deodorant. After working and sweating, hormones are high and skin glistens.

We usually go through about a pitcher and a half of water every lunch because of our dehydration. Everybody here agrees that the lunch meal is by far the best, though compared to food on the outside, everything in here is horrible.

After lunch we go back to our room for, and again, I'm estimating, about an hour and then off to the second half of school. As I stated before, I'm on independent study so I'm not much help, plus the subjects change every day anyway. After school's all done, we all go to our rooms for an hour to two and a half hours and slowly atrophy in silence.

We come out for dinner and then we go back to our cells. I know that details have been omitted, but in all reality, after the morning mopping and cleaning, the rest is just a blur of dullness that comes and goes. I'm not speaking for everyone but since I have been here, for a long time, my coping mechanism is a well-oiled routine. I choose to block out all voices, but staff most of the time, and I am almost always dissociated. I think of this place as a break from the real world. A place where I don't have to worry about where I am going to sleep, eat or go. Everything is planned out for me. It's actually like a hotel for 15 dollars a night room and board. Though bland as it may seem, this Juvenile Hall has helped me through a lot of stuff and given me a lot (and I mean A LOT) of time to think my life through and to figure out where I need to be and what I need to do.

A day in the life of a prisoner is not always dreary, though being away from the world connected only by news, is a bit depressing. We, the incarcerated, look forward to events that happen daily. Mondays are the most exciting for most because the activities vary the school routine. There are two people here on alternating Mondays. One is Alyssa the non-smoking lady and Dawn the Sex Education teacher. Mondays are also a time where parents can visit their sons and daughters. I've only gotten two visits since my arrest, so Mondays during visits is my sleeping time. Also, one of the interns has group on Mondays in which we have sort of a group therapy discussion.

Tuesdays shift considerably as they are more of a constructive and less entertaining day. On Tuesdays in school, we have Government in the morning for about two hours. Also on Tuesdays is yoga which I have heard is kind of fun but I've never been. Let's just say I'm not the limber type. Most of the time people come out of their rooms not because they want to participate, but because they want time out of their room. We don't get as much time outside as we need, so sometimes the night staff will take us out.

Wednesdays are chock full of everything. There's drug and alcohol group with one of my therapists in which we discuss addiction and how to overcome it. There is also a program called The Beat Within. The Beat Within is what keeps me occupied through my incarceration. Visits also are on Wednesdays, and Saturdays, too. In school, there is Drama or Performing Arts and for some reason I don't like it very much.

Thursdays are my days. We have Art in my school and I am an Artist, always have been, always will be. We draw for two hours in the first half of class and then we do math. Only level two's get to participate in the art program because only six people at a time are allowed.

Fridays are always hectic and I don't quite know why, but it is also one of my favorite days. On Friday we have poetry. I like poetry because it's a form of art and as I have said before, I am an artist. The hecticness of Fridays are somewhat reduced as meditation classes are available to those who need them.

The next day of the week, Saturday, we spend a large portion of our day locked up in our rooms. We go outside about an hour a day every day of the week, unless it's raining. There are bonuses for level two's on Saturday. Also, there is an activity called Store Program. Store Program is a special privilege for level two's who have lost less than fifteen points a week. Store program, "Store" for short, consists of certain people getting awarded time out of their rooms and snacks for good behavior. A few months ago, we had candy bars and sodas for snacks, but now they changed the rules around. We get water, granola bars and/or peanuts. Also, until a few months ago, we had little slips of paper that granted us five-minute phone calls. That was taken away because people abused that right. I must admit though,

continued on next page

after all the whining, routine life in here is surprisingly calm.

Although being locked up in here is not the best thing in the world, it's not all bad. We, or at least I, get all the attention we need, even if we don't want it. I've seen staff's eyes dart back and forth and even looking backward looking at everything around them. I've realized recently that they have nothing to gain from taking points and they are so strict because they are trying to prevent confrontation. Staff are trained in take downs and preventing fights. That's why, at least "I" think that's why, Marin County Juvenile Hall is one of the most safe in the state. When I first came here, I was greeted with respect that I didn't think I deserved. Unlike other people, the staff here doesn't treat us as criminals, or put us down because of our crimes.

Despite my "doing my own thing," I have learned a whole lot of things from school and bits and pieces of insight that I wouldn't have gotten anywhere else. They say you only get three great teachers and I believe that I have met two. One of them, the teacher here at Loma Alto, is Bart Jones. MCJH recently has upped its performance and cleanliness level by a lot, too.

Since being here, since I was homeless on the outs, I have grown quite attached to this institution and its staff members. On the outs (freedom), I was unsure whether or not I would get a meal or a place to sleep. Here I get both. If you take advantage of the Juvenile Hall, I believe you can go far.

I know I skipped Sunday and if you are wondering, you can relax because here it is: Like the rest of the week, there are elective credit groups, such a Church in the morning and Alcoholics Anonymous, which has helped me get over a disease

I didn't even know I had. Also on Sundays, well, that's about it. If you want to fill in the gaps, add about 3-5 movies a week and some free time, ping pong, dominos, cards and board games.

I have been locked up in this institution for several months and am being released in about two. Normally, people don't stay here for months on average. The juvenile court system is fairer than adult court and I've never had a problem with it.

Well, that's about it for my essay or whatever you would like to call it. This is my perception of this place. This, what you have just read, is the complete and utter truth. If you think I have told you some but left out other things, it's only because those "other things" didn't jump out as daily life.

-Dominic, Marin

From The Beat: Thank you very much for taking the time to write this incredibly in-depth piece about your everyday experiences inside Marin County Juvenile Hall. The only troubling part about your piece is the fact that you feel comfortable being behind bars. We're glad to hear that you feel that you have benefited greatly from being locked up. However, life is not meant to be lived behind bars. Even the people you speak highly of will tell you the same thing. Also, it saddens us to hear that in Juvenile Hall, you're getting things that you normally would stress off of obtaining on the outs. Why weren't you able to receive these things on the outs, i.e. a meal or a place to sleep? Do you believe you drank alcohol to escape reality? How do you feel your life will be once you're back on the outs? We don't want you to become accustomed to being "institutionalized" because you're a very talented young man. You should explore all the options and resources at your disposal to assist you in finding shelter when you're back on the outs. We know life on the outs can be extremely harsh on one's conscience, but it's easier to give up than to fight to persevere. What kind of a person are you? A quitter or a go-getter? Life is full of difficult moments that challenge one's character. Are you up for the challenge? The only question that only you can answer is: Are you ready and willing to win this battle? We're pulling for you Dominic! Now Beat reader, tell us about a week in your life in your institution!

C O P O W C O P I E C E S O F T H E W E E K

I Was A Puppet

temptation surrounded me left and right
and quickly i gave in, too weak to fight
satan was good at getting my attention
and i always gave in, did i forget to mention
just a short high or pleasure he'd throw in my face
and i'd say to myself, just one little taste
after all, no one's around to see
that's what satan said, trying to provoke me
i'd then give in, to all sorts of temptation
without a fight and with no hesitation
i wouldn't think twice of who i'd hurt
i treated everybody like a piece of dirt
satan controlled me for so many years
causing friends and loved ones grief and so many tears
everyone i knew thought i'd never change
but my life god planned out and then he rearranged
i now have the strength to turn the other way
but satan keeps trying to control me 'till this very day
he now realizes i no longer deserve evil things
i'm no longer his puppet, 'cause jesus cut the strings

-OB'trice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is a miracle of faith that we can make a clean escape from the confusion and self-destruction that held us like a slave in hell as we followed self-centered inclinations that hurt us as well as those others we touched while we were taking as much as we could — for we lost our self-respect when we lost what was good and came to neglect everyone we cared about or should. Yet here is the key, the trick to receiving Jesus' mercy is each and every day to remember to surrender our willful ways to the fire of our desire to do what's right today. "Just for today, I will not only pray but will walk my talk and keep the promises I make — to Him, the one who is all love with no sin. Today I am ready to begin again."

I Miss

I miss every bit, down to the carpet, the couch, the pillows, the choice to get up and just go to the bathroom or to get up and just go to the fridge and make whatever I want.

I miss getting into the shower whenever I feel like it. Waking up and having to share the bathroom with my little cousin in the morning and sometimes riding in the range rover wit' my auntie to drop her boyfriend off.

I miss laughing wit' my mom about the most stupid things we could think of or laugh at, wit' my mom about the most stupid things we could think of or laughing 'cause my grandma was trying to dance to some of my CD's after she had a glass of wine with my mom.

Or when all my auntie's cute friends come through and I stay home that night just so see if one of them would give a ninja some play. I'd almost hit something until they remember I'm too young but you can't blame a brother for trying.

I miss taking a long walk when I was having a bad day or got mad at my moms 'cause I wasn't going to school. I also miss freedom.

-Dboy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You did such a good job painting that picture of your life on the outs that you made us homesick too! We'll be remembering that image of your grandma trying to dance to your CD's (which ones? What artists!) for a long time. Can you put these writing skills to work, and try and write up a game plan for how you're going to keep that freedom when you get out? Like, what will you do next time you get mad at your moms, next time she gets on you for missing school? Because everything you miss will be waiting for you at home, but everything that holds you back will be waiting for you too.

my grandma was trying to dance
to some of my CD's after she had
a glass of wine with my mom

My Life

I wish I was still a kid so I could get rid of all this pain in my heart, and get a new start. Memories of the past, damn, they went by so fast.

I took everything for granted and all of a sudden my world turned out slanted.

Living in a cell is like living in hell.

After all these wasted years I can't hold on to these tear no more.

I wore a color, trying to be something I'm not.

I started smoking pot – never thinking about tomorrow, just trying to end the sorrow.

It ruined my relationship with my mom.

Next thing I know, I got a new PO named Tom.

These evil thoughts running through my brain, driving me insane.

Looking in the mirror, thinking my worst fear is near.

Death – wonder when will be my last breath.

-Chris, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Powerful poem Chris! They say that everyone has the same three big questions: Where did I come from? Where am I going? How long do I have? So it sounds like you're on the right planet, at least. Now tell us, what is the plan upon leaving this facility? What will you do differently?

People Think They Got No Choice

Looking out my window I see nothing but people selling drugs, to people's parent's so they can put some money in their pockets so they can make it out the hood one day.

Some people don't have no choice, because they grew up poor but then again you're taking food from another kid's mouth but that's how the game goes sometimes.

Looking out my window, I see people getting shooting each other and robbing each other, then again that's another way people get their money where I'm from. But they don't know that they're taking other people's hard earned money they might even hurt them when trying to take what they want. That's what I see out my window and that's real.

-Lil' Marie, 150 Crerw

From The Beat: There is so much to talk about in your writing. You don't just look out your window (it's easy to look), you see. It takes a certain kind of soul to be a seer, a person who doesn't just notice the world but tries to understand it. You look out onto your street and watch the pain, the crime, but you also try to understand why it happens, why people hurt each other the way they do. It means seeing with your eyes and seeing with your heart too. This is a great gift, where do you think it will take you?

Looking out my window I see nothing
but people selling drugs, to people's
parent's so they can put some money
in their pockets

It's Early

Ask me what time it is?

6:33am

the way this place looks reminds me of a place I can hardly remember

that's why I think I feel so sad

I remember it was always bright

Unlike this outside

Not matter what time

The bars on the windows remind me of my loneliness

And I sit here all alone on this green colored mat and stare

The shadows on the cement wall make me lonely now

Creating black and white rainbows

-Bianca, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Again—your use of images is blowing us away. It seems like one thing you have through these tough times is your pen—keep writing!

Soon To Be Pops

i been having the greatest feeling
something that will make you jump to the ceiling
being a pops, having a son

away from cops, having my fun
things is moving so fast for me
watching the whole world adore me

soon to be a dad living the glory,
can you understand my life story

beautiful wife at home waiting

six more months then we'll be debating
on what to buy my kid

but if i love living life the way it is

why do i have to change,

and rearrange

my concept

because i'm tired of living this non-sense

i'm clear now from all my blindness,

so don't mistake me for my kindness

later on me and my family will be shining

blinding, rewinding

on the worlds minding

-Viet, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Major props on becoming a pop, a dad! We're both proud of you and glad that you see how and why it's time for you to set your mind on living life right. Really, you're awfully young for parental responsibility to have already begun, but you're child will have only one father — so ready or not, it's time to put your business in order. And that does not mean no more fun, but it does mean no more guns — and all that square stuff like hugs not drugs, can help you rise above the usual mistakes of a young thug trying to change his life, stop doing wrong and start doing right. And when you slip, pick yourself up and get back on it — never quit on yourself, your wife or child; keep living a responsible father's life style, no matter what. Give it all you've got. Even if you and the wife fight, don't go dumb, just keep doing right and all those dark emotions will return to light.

My Heart

One shot to yo' heart without breaking your skin

no one has the power to hurt you like yo' kin

and your chest burns and your back aches

of fifteen years of holding it in and you only have
yourself to blame

if you continue to live this way,

Get it together, you got to heal your body

Get it together you got to heal your heart

What so ever your soul should reap

Get it together

-Britoria, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is such a powerful piece! You've captured so much emotion in not so many words, and managed to express some really intense emotions. Good work.

Wondering

Looking out my window makes me wonder if I am ever
going home.

Looking out my window makes me think: will I ever see
my son.

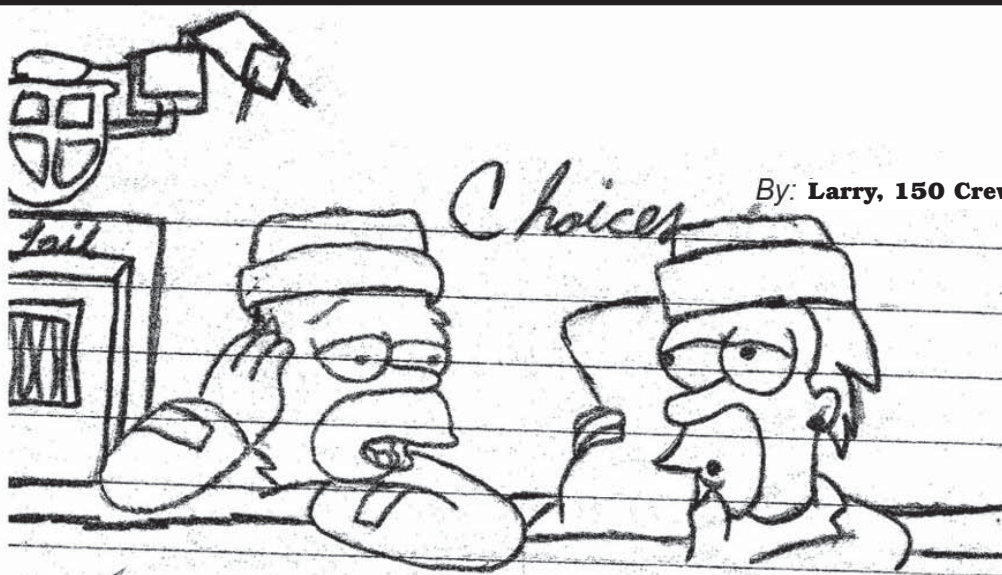
Looking out my window makes me think: am I ever going
to get to start a new life

Looking out my window makes me think I have to change
my life,

or I am going to come back to the window.

-Elise, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Beautifully written Elise. You will be with your son again. We remember that he was your biggest concern when you were last in juvy. It's really time to leave those old ways behind. Your son deserves to have his mother around all the time.



By: Larry, 150 Crew

Why are you in?
What you do?
Why?
Do you know, you need it?
YES you do, man

Violating probation
...didn't go to school
Because it's weak.
I don't need shhh.
I got everything.

Do you have a diploma?
See, you don't have everything.

What is that?
I got a girl, money, car
and clothes

You also have a death ticket -
jail time and drama.

I know, but no one ever
wanted to help me.

I will, just listen
God can help you
get anything you
need, but you have to
be on His side

Really? ?

Sure, but don't think
that you can just be on
His side when you need to
get out of trouble
or something.

Why?

Because that's trying
to play Him and
that's not good at all.

So, if i get out and
give up all the selling
drugs, stealing cars and
playing women and get
on God's side, things will
come for me in a better
way? And i will stop
coming here?

It's all up to what
you want to do.

Hey - yo, thanks man
you really touched me
with that information

anytime.

My Depression

I am depressed
 Wondering why
 As you think
 I know why
 Haven't seen my daughter
 Since Nov.3, 2005
 Haven't been home
 Since Aug. 9, 2005
 What in the hell
 That I got my butt into
 Think about my past
 Of what I did wrong
 Up in this placement
 For time I shouldn't be doing
 But what the hell
 I been here for nine months
 I been clean for nine months also
 I got three more months
 Up in this joint
 Miles will complete the program
 Raised without no father
 Just a mother who has six children
 But two of them died
 I sit by myself
 And wonder why
 It could've been me
 Dead
 Not alive
 My dad lies
 He never was there for me
 Ask for money
 He said "No"
 He hurt my feelings
 He kidnapped me
 From my mother
 Then he went to jail

-Las Tejanitas, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: There is a lot of pain and a lot of trauma described in this poem. What do you mean he kidnapped you? Why? Did he hurt you? Is he still in jail? Do you have any communications with him at all? When you think about how you got yourself in this situation, do you also think about what you're going to do when you get out to avoid this situation in the future? We understand why you're depressed, but we think you should give yourself a standing ovation for being clean for nine months. Nine months... the length of a pregnancy. Maybe it's time to think of a new birth for Las Tejanitas.

Regrets

I regret making my mom cry.
 The dumb stuff I did
 made tears come to her eye.
 I regret breaking my mom's heart.
 I started doing wrong –
 now she and I are apart.
 I regret using drugs
 because they got me in the hall.
 Now I'm sitting here stressing
 within these four brick walls.
 From now on I'm going to do right
 and go back to school.
 Like Tupac said:
 "my mama didn't raise no fool."
 Sorry mom for everything I've caused.
 I'll be home soon and it will all be different.
 I love you.

-Mikey, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: How will you make it different? What's your plan? We know you want to make it different. But words aren't action. Are you prepared to act? We hope so. Going back to school is a good start. Stick with it Mikey.

When I Was Younger

Barely starting to hang out with the wrong crowd,
 I had no heart for anybody,
 except my mom.
 I used to do heartless things
 to people's property,
 as well as to them.
 I didn't care.
 But once I started getting caught and people started talking to me
 about the difference between good and wrong,
 I started thinking – little by little – about love and hate.
 I've started to talk to younger people about love and hate and
 respect.

-Keith, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is quite a story. What do you tell the young people. We'd really like to know.

Keepin' It Real

The definition of "keepin' it real" is to be straight up with people and your homies. No bull, just straight up. It's also saying that it has to do with trust, in a way. Like for example – when my ex-man was playin' me, I told him to just keep it real, and he told me it was over, and what was up wit' him and my supposed homegirl. But now we cool.

My name is Caica, but people call me "Little Negra Beauty" and I've been reading The Beat for days. If this piece makes it in, I'd like to give a shout to my Daddy, locked up in "the pinta", and to my best friend. To all my fellow inmates, keep your heads up. Sorry I went off to another subject, but that's my definition of "keeping it real." Peace.

-Caica, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Welcome to The Beat Within! We do hope, if you are reading this that you continue to keep it real with your stories thoughts and ideas. We need your wisdom. We need your questions. We need your art! Every little bit counts Caica! Tell us more about you, and what your life has been like with your dad away in the pinta? We're listening!

Dear G.W. Bush

Why are you doing this to our people?
 Sending us to war for nothing.
 People dying for you and you are just playing golf.
 People are getting killed and you just change the laws.
 What is all this for, so you can get some money?
 What are you going to do about New Orleans,
 people lost their lives, their families and their homes.
 I just can't wait 'till I add my choice to the people's voice
 when we count up the next election's votes.

-Lil' Webbie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ballots not bullets is what the wise men say, even when political popularity seems to lead the wrong way — 'cause in the end, the foolishness of greedy men in love with power, separates the heroes from the cowards. A President's quickness to send poverty-stricken soldiers to war while others drown from neglect in New Orleans' ninth ward, well — that's what elections are for: the people's chance to settle the score.

I Was Young When I Knew

When did I know it was all on me? From when I was a baby, it was all on my parents. Now I'm a teenager and one that's not living right. When I live with my parents, it's all up to me to be on my own. But there is a lot of help around. Like my mom paying the bills for having a home for my brother and I. On my part, what I'm supposed to do is go to school, do good at my home, and get a good education. Right – now I think it is all on me.

-Carlos, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Well, that is a lot of responsibility, but it's the same responsibility that most of us have – so, you know that you can handle it, if you work hard at it. Have you tried working hard at it – really hard. If you do, we're pretty sure you'll succeed.

Again

Alone again,
beating myself up,
wondering why did I go out and do what I did
instead of doing good?
I feel alone and misunderstood
-having a baby with a dope fiend of a baby's daddy
not giving a damn.
I don't need no bull.
I got the Lord above beside me that will help me and
take the pain away.

-Chola, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You know that old saying: The Lord helps those who help themselves. It's time for you to start helping yourself. If you can't count on your baby's father, start looking for a safe home for you and your child. You both deserve a good home.

Wasted Breath

Wasted breath of my previous life
contributed to my life behind bars.
Living life on the edge,
it's waking up I dread.
Sometimes I think
I'm better off dead.
In this blizzard of thoughts a voice says:
Shame on you with your pessimism.
Don't you know your dreams are close.
With this thought I stay,
but just for today
because there will be a blizzard
on another day.

-Anibal, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: So, keep dreaming, and don't waste that breath. But do keep writing. We always look forward to what you'll write next.

I miss my uncle joking
around, getting on
everybody's nerves, eating
up everything in the
refrigerator.

A Lot I Miss

It's a lot of things I miss about home. I really miss my mother and my girl and my grandma. If there was anything I could do to change what I did, I would because I hate being locked up like an animal. This shhh depresses me every day.

All you do is listen to people tell you what to do. And me, I can't stand that shhh. When I do get out of this situation, I'm going to change. Be a better person than I was because if I keep going the route I'm going, I could end up in prison.

-Dominic B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It sounds like your head is in the right place, even if it took a cold bucket of ice water to the face to get it there... When did you realize that this isn't the life for you — and that you have it within your own control to change it? What can you do to survive without committing crimes? When you say you're "going to change," what are those future changes ("going to"), and why can't you make them now?

Skeptical

At first I was skeptical.
No way writing about my feelings was going to make a difference.
Slowly but surely I started coming around
-these lines turning my frown upside down.
And now I am for sure that writing poems makes my thoughts clean and pure.

-Anibal, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Music to our ears, Anibal. Your words are a symphony.

The Wish

Now that I look back, the wish I made was lame.
It got me locked up. It was a shame.
Now I'm on the edge of a hole, so I have to turn my life, once and for all. If I don't, even if the wind blows a little, it could make me fall. The distance from the top to the bottom of the hole is far. I could melt slowly, like a candle, getting smaller and smaller. I could start running from the problems I can't handle. But I have to stay strong, like a blizzard, because I don't want death.
I don't want to wake up being scared, wondering if this will be my last breath.

-Michael, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Good writing Michael. Your poem reminds us of that old saying about being careful what you wish for, because you might get it. We trust you'll choose more wisely in the future.

What Goes On In My Mind

What goes on in my mind is my room? I think about how my ex-lady played me when I first got locked up. I think about a plan for when I get out so I don't end up back in here. I'm gonna get my life together, go back to school when I get out go and get my GED and get a job so I can have pocket money to go out and so I don't have to ask my dad for money.

I like being independent so when I get a solid job I can do most of the things for myself. I also think about how some of my family is falling apart. I'm doing my best to keep them together. I think about my past, what I did to get in here. I regret that in my room I think about what goes on in my mind.

-Billy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's hard, isn't it, when you're locked up to do what you see needs to be done for your family. The only answer is to follow your own excellent plan to get your education and a job that pays a regular salary. We admire you for setting those goals for yourself, and hope you do everything in your power to achieve them.

Missing Family

What I miss about home is my mom, my grandmother and my mom's twin brother.

I miss my mom trying to sing all the time in her mirror bumping her hair. I miss my grandmother's big mouth always bossing the whole house around, making sure every morning is spring cleaning. She's like the boss around the house. I miss my uncle joking around, getting on everybody's nerves, eating up everything in the refrigerator.

I miss looking at cable television. I also miss my cell phone ringing off the hook. I miss my comfortable queen size bed. I miss everything about my house furniture. I miss my freedom of speech. I miss a good cooked meal. I miss just walking in my home.

-Ebony GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What we like most about this piece, Ebony, is how many very specific things that you miss which you listed in your piece. Of course, at the top of that list is your descriptions of your family members. How old is your uncle? He sounds like somebody we'd like a lot! Keep writing Ebony!

Looking Down On Tha Block

When I look out my window I see hustlas, rappers, hitters. I see my community. I see people beefin' over a block. Yes I use to run with them, but what for? When I look out the window I see dirty people in need of help digging through the garbage can. I see my life...

-Champagne GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: These are two short but powerful pieces, Champagne. We want to see you write something longer next time- we want to see you write a piece of the week!

Ready To Go

A young bullet don't know where I'ma take myself, a hot head and I am ready to go don't know how much power I got or if I can be stop or if I can go through anything and anyone, but I kind of feel like I can. How did I get in this kind of circumstance — caught up in a gun and I can't get out unless it releases me.

It's other ones and we fightin' to get out this gun but all I know when I leave I am make a loud noise and when I get free I hope I can see no more darkness. A young bullet ready to go but don't know where I am taking myself.

-Keith B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Well, young bullet, when the gun releases you, what will you do to make sure they never lock you inside that dark chamber again? Hopefully, you'll be shot out of incarceration soon, for we'd hate to see you locked up for too much longer. But what happens after that is largely up to you...

I Am Home

My home is my tone,
missin' my homies, my girl, and my mom

Kickin' it in the block doin' it big
always defeating my opposite side.

That's right, my home is my soul
Without home we don't grow

Smelling the air in my room, I repeat to myself:
I'm home! I want to go home with my family livin' so
happy

without tragedy

That's right, I am home

-Lil' Rapper B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's great to have such an imagination that merely the thought of home puts you there. When you think of home, besides these wonderfully poetic images, what do you think about specifically?

Scharod's Bullet

I wish I could have been my cousin's bullet just for one minute. I would have tried to aim for a wall, something solid or I would have been a blank.

I miss my cousin's mood swings and the way he used to prove himself wrong, because he always used to say "I can't do that" and would do it perfectly. I want to play fight with him and argue with his girlfriend. I hope that when I go to heaven I won't be too overwhelmed.

Love, your lil' cousin.

-Champagne GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear about your cousin's death, Champagne. You've written a very moving RIP for him. He sounds like he was a good man. What kind of advice do you think he'd give you if he could come back to earth to talk to you for ten minutes?

Miss Being A Regular Kid

What exactly do you miss about home? What I miss about home is my family, but I will be going home on the 8th of May. While I am in here, I miss being at home, arguing with my brother, fighting with my people, and being with my girlfriend — just being a regular kid, doing what kids normally do.

But I learned from my mistakes. I know what I did wrong. I'm willing to face consequences for my actions and move on with my life.

What I want to do when I get out of here is get a job and buy extra stuff that I want, and stop asking my homie for stuff, and pay my mom back. I want to finish high school and go to college and get a Ph.D in criminal justice and help people who were just like me.

But the reason I didn't panic was because I probably messed up. But I just only made a mistake, bad decisions. I could change that. But whatever I do, I would still be alive. You should be happy that you are blessed with a beautiful life. And I thank God for that, and that's why I want to go into criminal justice and help them to realize what I realize.

-Damon B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Going into criminal justice sounds like a terrific idea, Damon. From what you've already experienced within the juvenile justice system, how would you change it? What would you do to influence the youth more, to help them stay out of the system? What has helped you? Hurt you? Do you have to wait to get your Ph.D in order to help the younger generation coming up behind you? We really want to encourage you to pursue your education, whether you go all the way or not. Education is the key.

What I Really Miss

I miss the home cook food that moms got from down South. I miss sleepin' in my bed and wearin' my own clothes — period. I also miss bein' with my girls and the homies too.

I can't lie. Even though I'm out free I'm not free. I am still fighting the slavery entrapment that the world has on the young Black men. Until I get free mentally and physically I can return to my real home — that's what you really miss.

-Willie B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you believe that you can free yourself without getting out of jail? Do you think there are people out here on the streets that aren't free? Or (rarer still), people locked up who are free? We know that you're not waiting to be free physically to free your mind, and we're interested in how that effort is progressing?

Get Your Head Out Your Ass!

Get your knowledge out your mind.

All you have is eyes that aren't blind.

No one can take your smartness out your mentality.

Not even a man's spirituality.

Knowledge is king I am the queen

I put the puzzle together my knowledge remains forever

No matter the weather I be with it whenever.

My ambition is to be on top nonstop.

The lies of a million don't plot.

Politics never stop not even the earth street smarts.

Two wrongs don't make no right, only god's hands might.

Reality is to infinity and loves is to destiny.

Trust no one, trust no fakes. Have self-esteem.

Knowledge is the king. Do you finally realize what I mean?

Now for you it means get your head out your...

-Lil' Payasa GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You say a lot of things in this poem, Lil' Payasa, but we wonder how you apply these thoughts to your own life, your own choices... What do you mean when you say you want to be on top? What does that mean to you? Does it mean being queen of the streets, or leaving the street life altogether? One thing for sure: you are no queen where you are, so we hope you regain your royal crown when you get out of here, and are able to keep it by staying out of here! You have a way with words, and we want you to use that talent to really talk about yourself.

Wild Birds Out the Window

When I look outside my window wherever I'm at, I imagine what I'ma be doin' in my future. My window of opportunity is closing and all I can do is watch the sun come up and the sun go down. Watch the birds fly, and I wish I could be like them wild birds.

I can't be in a cage like a damn animal with a blurry window. I see hope and despair, waiting to receive my third chance. And luck runs in threes.

My window of opportunity will not be broken.

-Young Rueb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You deserve to be like one of those wild birds. Like you said, in this great line about the blurry county window, human beings aren't meant to be in cages. And you if you believe your luck runs in threes, then that means you might just be about to make sure those wings never get clipped again. Fly free!

Beat Within

Why is it that as time changes people change also? I received a letter recently telling me that people moved, changed or passed away, so I'm in my cell just thinking! It feels as if the whole time I've been here time has stopped, especially for me, and that when my release date comes everything will start back off were I left it at.

I know that time won't stop and that I'm not gonna be able to start back off where I left off. And that my time here is time wasted 'cause I'll never get that time back!

-Will, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know how it feels to want to stop time. It's hard to feel things moving on without you, and so painful to know that some things will never be the same. We hope you can figure out a way to make this time good for you in some way. Reading books to pass the time is something that can enrich your mind and spirit. We're rooting for you.

Tough Question

You can't be strong and weak at the same time but if you're weak and act strong what are you?

Would you still be weak?

Or would you be strong because you act strong?

-Bianca, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good question. To answer that, we first have to know what is considered "weak" and what "strong"? Is it weak to show emotion? Or could it be a strength to admit it when we are feeling scared and sad—to confront our feelings and try to work through them. What do you think?

Missing Family

What I miss about home is my mom, my grandmother and my mom's twin brother.

I miss my mom trying to sing all the time in her mirror bumping her hair. I miss my grandmother's big mouth always bossing the whole house around, making sure every morning is spring cleaning. She's like the boss around the house. I miss my uncle joking around, getting on everybody's nerves, eating up everything in the refrigerator.

I miss looking at cable television. I also miss my cell phone ringing off the hook. I miss my comfortable queen size bed. I miss everything about my house furniture. I miss my freedom of speech. I miss a good cooked meal. I miss just walking in my home.

-Ebony GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What we like most about this piece, Ebony, is how many very specific things that you miss which you listed in your piece. Of course, at the top of that list is your descriptions of your family members. How old is your uncle? He sounds like somebody we'd like a lot! Keep writing Ebony!

Being Real

Me personally keeping it real means being real and truthful to your self at all times.

People think that sticking to the rules of the street means "Not Snitching" or "I'ma always stay on my turf," or represent where I'm from, but my definition of keeping it real means being real to yourself and knowing who you are.

For example, I know that I'm a strong individual, and I know that I am capable of doing a lot of things, just because I'm in JH doesn't mean that I'm a bad person, so by me being the real female I am.

I'm going to keep it real with myself and pursue my dreams. I'm a butterfly with or without the wings, but right now I'm in that caterpillar stage.

Often times people and bad situations come my way, so it leaves me in the garden of pain and despair, but because I'm a butterfly in the making, it doesn't change the fact that I was destined to spread my wings. I'm just keeping it real.

-Danielle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We really like your butterfly metaphor, and know that you'll spread those wings soon. Without caterpillars there wouldn't even be any butterflies—and then where would the flowers be?

Just One Or Two Thoughts

Tonight I'm sitting in this unit

And can't wait to get out and live a normal life just like you

Each and every day in here is like I already left earth
And truthfully till I get out, my heart will still ache and hurt

It's funny because not only is this my second time
I'm feeling sick and real upset, I truthfully think this is the end of the line

Not for my life, those words are too strong
But I think my dude knocked me up and I possibly can't be that that long.

I've been in this unit for five days,

And in the hall forty-seven to be exact.

The showers I take are cold, and the food taste like it fell from my crack

We only get rec for an hour

And sometimes might get a call

If only you knew what it was like to be in the hall

-Antoinette, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel your pain and your frustration with incarceration. What will it be like for you when you get out? Will your memories of the hall—the food and cold showers, the lack of free time—help you to stay on track? What's your plan?

The Things I Miss

The things that I miss about home is talkin' to my mama from time to time, having girls come over, but most of all it just my freedom in general. The reason why I really want to be out of this hell hole is because I want to show my mother that I can do right and go to college. Another reason why I want to get out is so I could show my girl that I could be a good father to my kid when it get born.

-Eric B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Eric, they always say actions speak louder than words. We applaud your goals of wanting to go to college because we think it will open doors for you that you don't even know exist yet. And we admire your reasons for wanting to change: making your mother happy and being a responsible father. But we hope you add to this list your own self-satisfaction in knowing you set the bar high, and you went after it. Don't let yourself down.

Beat What's Crackin'?

Not much here, just kickin' it over here in this unit in Alaco. I've been here for a week now, just waitin' for my court date on May 1st. at which point I'm hopin' they'll send me home to get my life right.

There is a helluva lot that I have to accomplish to be successful. I must stay determined to do it. I'm a junior and I'm down about 40 credits and maybe more when this year ends.

I'm going home to point my nose down and do what I have to do to make my pops proud.

Schools never been all that hard for me, but I haven't got much done at all in the last year and a half of school. Especially sophomore year, I was too concerned with burnin' those trees to do my work, which was a crappy choice.

It's crazy in here, and this guy I used to blaze with all the time got here a few days ago, and he's tellin' me about all these people that I used to know, and how they're all in some kind of rehab or another.

It's amazing that so much has happened that I don't know about. I guess that's what happens when you're gone for eight or nine months. I don't want to get caught up in that crap when I go home, I won't — I'm too determined to be all that I can be!

-A-Pizzel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A lot of people spend time on lockdown without getting smart. They come out as hell bent on their own destruction as they were the day they got locked up. But judging from this piece, it sounds like something different happened for you. It's like you came in as a boy, someone who didn't understand what he was doing, and you're leaving as a young man, older, wiser, ready to make sure he doesn't wind up a statistic or an addict. If so, getting locked up might be the best thing that ever happened to you, long term.

I Pray to Leave Soon

Today I just got an interview by my PO. I should be leavin' to go home next week and today is the 25th of April and I should get released on that fourth of May.

I spent my birthday, my brotha's birthday, my potna's birthday, and girlfriend's birthday in here. I'm gonna be out here and be back in my hometown. I'll be doing what I did before I got here, but this time do what I did before I got here. But this time do it the right way, to not get myself in here. I'm going to school and probably going to think what I do first now.

Man I miss my dawgs — like Lil' Wayne but a little different.

'Cause my dawgs passed away — in the mix. It wasn't time for my ninjas to go, but God tells when it's time to go. Before each one of them passed (got shot) away on the real. One was just posted on the block and I just smoked two blunts with him before he went to kick it wit' his other ninjaz on the other side of that block. I miss him hecka much 'cause we still supposed to be here dancing still on the real. RIP Meech, you are missed. Next is another potna of mine, we went to school at East Campus. I was always smokin' wit him at school 'cause we was from the same turf. And plus him and my uncle was always together at school. I miss him too. RIP Armon, you are missed.

-K-Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for such a moving and powerful testimony to the people you've loved and lost in life. Too many birthdays in the first half, too many funerals in the second. And yet, here you are, you're still alive, and more importantly, you're still strong and you still have heart. Do you think there's a reason for this? Maybe you're still here because of what you have to offer the world, because you could end up being part of the fight to end all these killings, all these tragic losses. It's on you now, what are you going to do?

Dear Beat Within

What's up it's ya gurl Angela from tis unit to tell y'all what's been going on with me! Basically I been in here a month and a half and should be gone by May, 8! But I ain't going home I am not worried about when I am going to leave but when I leave am I going to stay or leave? I still don't know what I'm going to do.

Before, when I didn't know when I was getting out, I knew exactly what I was going to do but now that I know I am going to be released in less than two weeks I am scared because I "could" stay and do my program or I could just as easily go back to doing what I was doing; but all I can do is hope, pray, and asked for forgiveness in whatever I do.

To all in here stay strong don't give up hope and hopefully I'll see you soon! One love.

-Angela, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We vote for staying in your program and making it work. The other route sounds like it would lead to regrets and making the same choices that got you to where you are. Cycles are hard to break, but usually good things come from breaking them. Good luck on your journey.

Communicationless

I miss my bed, my room, my shower, my clothes, and my food.

While in jail all I could hear was our bed, our room, our shower, our clothes and our food. Not to mention the least about my family.

I miss bein' able to communicate to whomever and whenever I please. I miss everything there is to possibly miss bein' free.

When I get out I won't miss the old me. I'm going to be the Christian I used to be.

-Nu Nu, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Communication, of course. It's not easy to be cut off from the ones we love, with little opportunity to share what we're going through and how we feel. Good luck making those changes when you get out—you don't want to be stuck missing everything again.

What's Your Definition Of Keepin' It Real

My definition of keepin' it real is being outspoken sayin' what's on your mind and not carin' what other people think about your thoughts.

-Errica, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's the truth...it's hard sometimes not to edit what we say based on other people's reactions. Unless we are going to cause someone unnecessary pain by saying what we believe, it's important to speak our minds.

This Is It

Today April 18, 06, I finally welcomed the Lord into my heart. After so many times coming back and forth to the hall, I finally realized this is it, time for a new life.

I was just sitting in the cage realizing I'm tired of being treated like an animal, but guess what, that's what I'm not 'cause I have the Lord with me, and no matter what he will not deceive me, so what I'm trying to say is God is gonna help me through everything because I got faith and the Lord is with me and he is going to help me through my pain and troubles.

-Mekisha

From The Beat: We're glad you found a guiding force, and hope that your new life takes you to better places. What will you do to help god in this job? It's important to feel another presence to encourage us, but we still need to do the work to care for ourselves.

Looking Out My Camp Window

I'm in here looking out the window to the outs, and I see me running down that hill! Yeah, but sometimes I think about not running, too, 'cause I might go to the "Y" if I escape this place instead of get released.

I really miss my family a lot. My brother just went down for a pistol-and-some-weed case, and pimping seven bops. I'm especially worried about him 'cause he just turned eighteen — and now he's in Rita.

I'm looking out my window because I'm thinking about the past. I should never have got caught with that weed or have sold those pills. I miss watching TV on late night and talking on the phone to my beezy. I'm tired of eatin' this county food; I want to go home and eat soul food. I miss listening to the radio at home while I'm laying in bed next to my girl.

-Al-Boo Boo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do not run! You think you're running to freedom, but really you're running to the 'Y'! It's just a matter of time. So handle your time here, and when you get released, walk down that hill — free and clear! And don't follow your brother's example, 'cause he thought he was living large and all, but was just setting himself up for a fall. We're worried for him, too.

This Pain

The pain inside
Won't let me sleep,
It makes me cry
Then makes me weak...

I think of him
And say his name,
But something's wrong
Nothing's changed...

He no longer comes
When he hears the sound
As my weakened body
Drops to the ground...

I reach out for him
But he's not there,
He no longer listens
He just doesn't care...
I cry out to him
Still hoping he'll come
But it's evident
That we're way past done...

-Broken Heart, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is such a good piece, we wish you had claimed it! Maybe next time.

Makin' The Best Of It

I'm up here at Camp doing a perfect program, like I knew I could. It's very easy really, but sometimes I do feel like giving up. Then I stop and tell myself that I know I can make it!

I have confidence in myself, and this is one of my strongest assets. I went home last Sunday, and it's too bad that ain't nothing changed but me! But now, I know that's how it has to be. And I'm going to be out in five or six months. You know, it ain't nothing to a boss!

But I'm'a end it on a positive note: everybody in locked-up facilities, keep your head up, 'cause you gone make it! They can't keep us down for long, unless you got life.

-Lil' Jonah, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are already making it! Your confidence, determination and insight are all working for you, every day, and will take you all the way to freedom. But that's just half the job, 'cause the other half is staying free — and it sounds like you're ready to handle that reality, too. Major props to you!

I Miss Life

I miss being in the hood
I miss going dumb wit' my patnas
I miss my bed
I miss all the food
I miss my phone calls
I miss my female
I miss my bed
I miss my lil girl
I miss stayin' up late night
I miss my clothes
I miss my shoes
I miss my house
I miss my mom
I miss my lil bra
I miss my cousin
I miss my freedom
I miss life

-Anon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got it all here, the perfect shoutout/poem honoring everything out there that we miss when deprived our freedom: Home, family, love, friends... and yet you didn't write a name. Next tiem sign your work, it's something to be proud of!

Looking Out My Window

When I look out the window, I see a nice young man. This young man walks tall and stands proud. He doesn't get in any trouble.

He goes to school and he has a part-time job. He makes his family proud. He isn't about being in the streets, and he minds his own business. Everyone says that he's a nice young man.

When I look out the window, I see my future!

-Emmanuel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We see your future in your words and the promise in your eyes, that the future you write about here will soon be realized. If and when you do make a mistake, just face the truth and don't be fake — get back to being the nice young man you're seeing out your window today, and everything will be A-Okay! We know you can take this dream all the way.

What I've Been Through

What's up Beat this is your boy Lil' Joker. I've been through a lot of stuff. My mom's always yelling at me and when I was little my step dad use to beat me up.

I started becoming bad when I hit fourth/fifth grade. I was getting in lots of fights, always up in detention, but the thing that was good about me in school is I get good grades: A's and B's.

I'm telling this to all that are locked up that could do better. I got kicked out of school and it's not good to be out of school. For example look at me: I'm locked up.

Lil' Joker, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a sign of courage to admit your mistakes (getting kicked out of school) and to point yourself out as an example of what not to do. You have that courage, and we hope you step up again and again in The Beat's pages as a wise teacher.

Looking Out The Window: Two Stories

I remember when my brother was going to the window, and they was shooting down in the street — and one of the bullets come through the window! And how come my brother almost got shot? And how come bullets was going toward my home? But they bought a new window. And the bullets went into the house and they came out.

And I remember another time when my brothers was looking out the window and they saw some girls passing by. And I remember they was mad because they couldn't go out and talk to them. I remember it so well, and that's why I'm telling it now. But now, how come they could smoke a cigarette out the window like that?

-Juanito, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is amazing how vivid certain memories are in our minds. Certain moments remain unforgettable. If you live long enough to have grandchildren, and one day you're telling them stories about when you were young — these two memories will probably pop into your mind as if they happened yesterday.

Never Knew I . . .

never knew
i could go bad
everything goes bad
no dad
to raise his child
time is so sad
hold that
for next time
nobody knows that
these people don't feel
what i feel
you wanna hold that
lost and can't go back
so find my way
live my life fast
rewind the space
nine times the pace
then pull the e-brake
doing s—i—x to nine
then ask is he straight
i don't know what to do
put yourself in my shoes
all i know is next time
i will know what to do
'cause in the end
ask yourself is you
winning to lose
then begin another chapter
not ending too soon

-Lyfe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ooo, you take is through some sad, bad times, reminding us of just how blind pain can make our minds insane as if a spiritual bullet had passed fast through our brain, leaving us numb, dumb and eager to escape our fate any which way we can. But then, a few of us are lucky enough to make it to be a man who can begin to understand that he is, can be, and really always was, more than his absent daddy could ever see — and so he took a second look and starts that next chapter of his life's book and makes a whole new reality, rewrites his autobiography with every word he speaks and with his every deed creates a better fate, now that he knows it's not too late to begin again.

Family

What I miss most about home is my family and spending time with them. I miss playing with my son at home and watching TV with him. I miss him waking me up in the morning to watch his favorite TV show, Elmo (Sesame Street).

I miss my bed and sleeping in it. I miss my son jumping on the bed and waking me up.

I miss playing video games and my son sitting right next to me watching.

I miss spending time with my girlfriend. I miss staying up late and watching TV with my girlfriend. But most of all I miss spending time with my family.

-Ismael, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You really make your family life come alive with this piece, Ismael, plus your love for your son... It just shows how much you have to live for on the outs, and how much you are loved and needed out there. Tell us more about him, your son and your hopes and dreams for his future... Who does he look more like, you or his mom? Does he have your personality? What kind of a dad do you want to be?

Looking Out My Window

Looking out my window, I see a life I could live — if I wouldn't have done what I've done.

As I look out my window, I see the wind blow through the trees, and the birds sing, as I look out my window — and I realize if only I would have done what I was supposed to, I wouldn't be looking out my cell window.

As I look out my window, I see the light I want to be around me. As I look out my window, I hear planes pass but can't see them. As I look out my window, I wish I could be around my family.

-Young D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: As you tell us about looking out your window, we feel every word you speak as if every reader of The Beat were speaking through you. You've made it to the camp on the hill, and if you're patient you will be home, free, with your family. And if you've learned your lesson, home will be only one of many blessings you receive. At least that's what we see for you, if only you're willing to do what you need to — to stay free.

I'm Both

I guess you can say both because I don't want to die but I know that God put us on Earth with one promise and that promise is to die.

As far as me willing to risk my life for someone else I'll do it not for fame, or fortune, but because of my love for that person. Other people don't look at it that way. They think hell naw, I ain't dying for no one, but that's just me.

-Bianca, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's pretty sad to think about, but as long as we live good lives and do the best we can, then maybe death is just a passage-way.

My Life

I'm an AK-47 bullet. I come from a company named Ammunition, Inc. Then I got transferred to a store called Gunz. I was bought by a crazy Mexican. After I was bought, my owner put me inside the banana clip. Then he carried me and my homie AK, inside the '66 Chevy Impala.

We were cruisin' in them West Bay Streets for a minute, when we came up this street and my owner seen someone sporting a rival color. He then grabbed my homie AK with me. He cocked my homie, then squeezed the trigger hella tight. Then — pow! One to the rival color. One shot make him bleed and he dropped to the floor. Then that was it. I was done. This is how my life was.

-Lil' Vamp, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Pretty sad story, but what can you expect from a bullet? But that Mexicans and others are killing each other over colors, feuding over drug turf like that's worth even one single human life — yeah, that's crazy all right. And sad, too.

I Miss Being Home

What I miss?

I miss my legal guardian, my mom.

She took care of me since I was born. And thank God for that.

I miss eating when I want and going to the bathroom when I want to.

But most of all I miss being at home studying for a sermon to preach.

But I know God is able.

I'm on my way to camp and I'm still going to study and pray.

When I leave here I'm still going to preach the word of God.

He will never leave us or forsake us

I know that.

The question is do you know that?

So complete what the courts give you and you will be back home with your family

and you don't have to worry about missing them.

Do the right thing not the wrong thing.

-Rev. Do

From The Beat: Rev. Do preaching his woprd and we appreciate it. We hope some of our loyal readers are feeling you on this too. What's your game plan?

Make The World

When I look out my window I see fame starin' at me
 When I do something good to the community
 One day I will wake up and look out my window
 And see things that I built for my community
 Make the world a better place to live in
 So when kids look out their window
 They will see playgrounds, theme parks for them to play in,
 Instead of committing crimes.
 It will be somethin' to do in Oakland.
 I miss you JJ

-Ant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's like Luis Rodriguez said when he came to speak to you guys last week - the world needs you, the neighborhood needs you. The system treats you like you're the problem, but actually, as your wonderful little poem shows, if you decide you want to be, you can be part of the solution. Build those parks, build those playgrounds - but first build a peaceful powerful place in your mind, to make you strong so you know how to say no to the negative when it tries to tempt you away from your dream.

The Two Lives of Lil Turk

Bad life.
 I miss on the real. I miss my squad. I miss having sex
 I miss popping pills, I miss smoking weed, I miss KFC
 I miss sideshows I miss my hood
 I miss my dead ninja, J-5
 I just miss the life of a thug.

Good Life
 I miss my mom
 I miss my brothers
 I miss my playing basketball
 I even miss school
 I miss just being with my family
 I miss being a kid

-Lil' Turk, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You rose up to the challenge and took a one sided flow and turned it into a complex poem that showed all the stress and struggle of trying to come up in this hard world. We feel you on being pulled in these two directions, and it breaks our heart to see how the thug life stole J-5's future. The streets do that don't they - they take away the chance to be a kid. Here's a question: If you had to choose which of these lives in your heart of hearts you most wanted to pursue, which one would it be? Which one is the true you?

My Beautiful Family

I miss my family at home. I miss walking in the house and hearing my little sister singing in the dining room, even though sometimes I would tell her to shut up. I wish I could just hear her right now. I miss my little brother even though I know most of time we don't get along.

I really wish I could just hug him and tell him I love him and that we could talk and stop fighting.

Also I miss my big brother because I haven't talked to him in like two weeks and I just want to hear his voice so I know that he's alright and I want to let him know I'm coming home on Thursday, hopefully.

I miss my brother Aliddan too, even though he really isn't my brother. I miss him a lot because he always had my back whenever anything happened.

I miss my other big brother too, because he always was supportive to me.

I miss my dad even though we really don't talk like we should, but when I get out I'm going to spend more quality time with him.

Last but not least I really miss my mom because she's a strong black woman and I will always love her with all my heart.

-Julian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've hit on a universal truth: sometimes you don't appreciate what you have until it's gone. You must be so excited for when you get out, and you can show your family how much you love and appreciate them. You're lucky that you'll get out and get a second chance - it's not too late!

What Exactly Do You Miss About Home?

I miss my mom's homemade baked pies and cakes.
 I miss waking up late for school and all the female hugs

in the morning.

I miss me wearing my Air Force One's that I put on to go to school.

I miss my females that I am with before I go to school.

I miss me kickin' it with my ninjas on the block.

I miss my teachers at school

when I think about it they were cool.

I miss playing Madden '05 on my PS2.

I miss getting out of school

and going to Taco Bell and buying a crunch wrap and cinnamon sticks with a soda.

I miss Bayfair movies with my hood girl.

I miss it all.

-Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for putting it down with all the details about your life on the outs. We hope you get out soon and stay out forever, enjoying all of life's small pleasures and the challenges of returning to school!

I miss my teachers at school
 when I think about it they
 were cool.

I'm A Bullet

You better watch yo' back because if you come on my block you gonna get jacked and if you resist getting jacked I'ma break yo' back
 'Cause it ain't no game when you step into my ring homie

Especially if you a phony

I'm a shoot and make you change homie

I'm a bullet

You can sell rocks

But not on my block

Knocks that sell rocks on my block get they dome popped

I'm a bullet

When I hit you you gonna feel it

I'm a drill holes in you 'cause I thought I told you

Dude

I'm a bullet

And I'm out

'Cause that's all I have to rap about

That's how I used to be

Now I'm just trying to get my life together and finish school, help moms out and help my girl out, 'cause she's pregnant

-Lil' TT, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We had to print this because a) we decided to believe you that a part of you does want to get your life together and prepare to be a man... and b) look at the raw skills on these rhymes, the way you built up a hook (I'm a bullet) and made sure all your rhymes were tight. We couldn't dishonor that talent, but we also can't help but say that this talent is wasted if you use it to describe the deathstyle of the bullet as if it's something to be proud of. Can you make a rhyme that's equally strong and lyrical, but make it about the life you WANT to lead, to take care of your baby?

Get It Together

I feel I'm losing my mind
Where is it going?
This stress is killing me
But now it's showing
Worry lines upside my forehead
'Cause the life I live
Only leaves more dead
To say the least
Not enough need more said
Cats lyin' stealin'
Just to get more bread
That ain't the answer
There is a better way
Get yo' shhh together
Try to make honest pay

-Lil' D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is some knockout rhyming, with every piece you get a little more advanced and a little more sophisticated. We're looking forward to publishing your latest work of long prose, too. In addition to your poetry.

Keepin' My Head Up

What's up, This me, Kev, in max waitin' to go to YA. Right now I just been tryin' not to stress, but I keep tellin' myself I got to make it through this one and keep my head up and stay strong for my loved ones at home, 'cause I got to survive and keep my feet on the ground, but I got to pimp this time, and do the right thing. I don't care what I got to give up to live life right this time.

-Kev Mien, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We see you each week, facing an uncertain future with courage and good spirits, and we gotta say, it's pretty inspiring. Something about the way you say "I'm gonna keep my head up" makes us believe it's not just words to you. So tell us now, what does it mean to you to "keep your feet on the ground." What kind of plan have you made for yourself in terms of what you're going to do with your time in the Y? And then, after?

I Miss...

I miss the hut, aka house

I would love to be there right now, kickin' it with friends, family and my dogs. Sometimes, calling a homegirl up and asking if she's going to call her friends, so I call my friends so we kick it at my house.

I miss going to church with my mom. She always has a smile on her face.

I miss my step-dad, my brothers and sister.

I miss smokin' Newports on the porch. Sometimes I wonder what's going at the Ja-ha-ba-the hut. That's the nickname for my house. We got slap in front, big screen TV, DVD, CD, VHS, all in one.

I miss listening to my brothers rap and friends.

I miss going to the school house. Think about a soft bed watching TV.

I miss grandmother's cooking and my grandfather's long talks about life. I wish I would have paid attention.

I miss wake up in the middle of the night going outside looking, stargazing, smokin' a Newport or two wondering if my life's going to change.

Well Beat, it's time for "Unknown" to go back to his hut someday.

-Unknown, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes, it is time. Make sure that you leave the Hut with these things in mind. You never really appreciate things 'till they are gone. Stay IN the hut and OUT of trouble.

Thinking Back And Looking Forward Out My Window

Looking out my cell window I see all the police cars drive by with someone new coming in and I ask myself do I know them? Why are they here? Are they getting out before me?

Looking out my window I see my friends on the outs and they're having fun and I ask myself, what the hell am I doing in here? I could be out having some fun. I think about how life is going to be in five or ten years, how my friends are. I got all the time in the world and I can't do anything with it, but to think and I think of everything about life, from the past, future and present. This is all I think about looking out my window.

-Giovani, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Those are some deep, existential thoughts you're having. Thinking about your future while locked up is hard, because it feels so out of your control. Try making a plan for yourself. Decide what you want, and what you have to do to get it. The power is yours, if you're ready to make those decisions.

Missin' My Family And Especially My Daughter

What do I exactly miss about home is my family, my girlfriend, and especially my daughter. I really miss all of them, because that's the most important thing in my life. Without them I'm nobody, especially in this position that I'm in right now, because my family and my girl are the ones that's giving me all the support and love they can.

And I also miss freedom because when you're at home you could do anything you want. I know I can, I don't know about y'all. But man I know this time when I get out (I hope is soon), I'm gon' do anything to stay out of here or other places like this or worse than this. So that I won't have to miss my family, and loved ones and freedom. Well that's all I have to say, much love from yo' boy Diego from Oakland.

-Diego, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can feel the determination coming off the page, and there's no doubt that you have a great deal of love and reason to go on waiting for you when you get out. But how are you going to do it? What's your plan? Who's your support? Do you have a teacher you respect? A mentor? A job? A group? All these things can help you get on track and stay on track.

To Love You

it's something
special about you
that i feel in my heart
to love you is to remember joyfully
the days we made memorable
the moments that will live forever in our hearts
the dreams we hope for
the feelings we have for each other
the dreams and touches of love
loving you
forgiving even though it's hard to forget
'cause you're the love of my life
to love you is to need you
to love you is to hold you
and know you as no one else can
to love you is to realize that life without you
would be no life at all
i will always want you in my life
i will always want you in my dreams
you touched me in a spot that's my core
i will never cheat on you
you wouldn't have to walk out the door
i love you baby forevermore

-Lil' Ant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If wooing words were guaranteed to win the day, and promises were not just words that people say, then happiness forevermore awaits you outside these locked doors.

Truth

when you tell me you care
is it a lie
what do I gotta do
to make you realize
baby girl you got me hypnotized
the second i looked into your eyes
i stopped questioning myself
and asking why
you made my confidence soar
made a homie wanna be soft
not hardcore
each day i love you more
and more
instead of the streets
i'm in the store
working my ass off to take you out
i'll never raise my voice at you
never shout
'cause a lady like you
deserves some respect
a girl like you
i'll never neglect

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now is this the perfect Beat love poem, or what? Promising not only all the love you've got, but the respect she deserves — and promising never to swerve back into that so-called fast lane that brought the both of you incarceration's pain of separation. We say, don't forget the promises you're making!

Just Can't Stop Lovin' You

when you are near, i never feel blue,
i have no fear, this love is true
i never want what you cannot give
you never taunt the way i choose the live
you truly love me, of that i have know doubt
there is no need to be worried about me being without
i know exactly how you feel, that is how i know this love is real
baby i love you always and forever
when i kiss your lips, they're soft as feathers
i'll run miles for you, no matter the weather
i'll always have a smile on my face as long as we're together
i wouldn't cheat on you, i promise, baby, never
baby, when i get out, i'll make everything better
i love you just like you love me
you're that special person
you set my soul free
when i got down on that one knee
and said honey would you marry me
from that point on, to my heart you hold the key
there will never be a "i" alone
there will always be a "we" at home
baby i really do love you, can't you see
there will never be another, it will always be you
baby, i just can't stop lovin' you

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: To make everything better when you get out this time, you'll have to do even better than last time when you did pretty darn well. But with one foot in the heaven of your new life, you kept the other foot dangling in the flames of hell — playing with that fire, in the end didn't treat you well. You say she never criticized the life you choose to live, but maybe you'd still be free if she did — if you could listen. Tell yourself the truth and stay out of the system.

What Exactly Do I Miss

What I exactly miss about home is a lot of things, but sometimes I think that I shouldn't miss it, because if I wasn't stupid and was in school at the time I wouldn't be here.

If I wasn't out doing bad I wouldn't be here. I wouldn't miss home and the good food.

I had it good. Everything I needed I had and every thing I wanted I had. But most of all I miss my brother, my girl, my life and that's real talk.

Most kids these days love to cut school and love to sell drugs and only look at the outside of things. The thing you can get and never look at the inside. About the risk you are taking the things you can lose like your friends, family, money, freedom even your life and nobody wants to lose that, but I am saying this to say stay in school and stay off the street and that's all real talk.

-Rap, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good for you for recognizing who's responsibility it is that you're locked up: yours. Why do you think so many kids only look at the outside of things? Can you tell us more about why things are the way they are? Of course no one knows for sure, but for one page, let yourself be the philosopher!

Family, Society and Me

My family motivates me, by coming and visiting me, and by always buying different kinds snacks for me and always telling me to stay positive.

Then another thing that keeps me motivated is myself — and now I think about hanging with people that can get me caught up or can blame me for things, and I've told myself to make it a point to just be around either positive people, people close to my family, or I've been knowing for a long while. In other words, I just won't let people get close to me, unless it's a girl.

I just can't wait 'til my court date tomorrow. Hopefully, I'll get a chance to prove myself to my family, society, and myself, but most of all, at this point, the judge — by graduating high school!

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're proud of you for graduating high school, and we're sure that your family is proud of you, too. The judge surely has power over your external circumstances, but remember it's your own power of judgment that will shape the future course of your life in the long run. Keep making yourself, your family and society proud of you, no matter what!

Ignorance

There is some ignorant people in here. That's why they are probably here. Just like the other day, we had to write lines, 'cause some dumb people be leaving a big mess in the bathroom. This is the second time we had to write lines.

Then the next day I was working, and after school, when we was cleaning up, they left the bathroom messy — tissue all over and stuff. Now, I know, it ain't everyone, but just some folks in here. Some coo' people here, but everyone else — get your stuff together! 'Cause you're messing it up for all of us. Late. Big Vic, out max!

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's sad how a few can mess it up for everyone, but it's a fact. Bringing group pressure can help improve the situation, perhaps, but it's a fact that you have to maintain your peace of mind whether you do or don't have to write lines. And don't let the daily grind in max, take your attention away from using your time to strengthen your will to rise above a life of crime — and to formulate a practical plan about how you can!

Hopefully, I'll get
a chance to prove
myself to my family,
society, and myself,
but most of all, at this
point, the judge — by
graduating high school

Words Of A Missin' Brother: To My Lil' Sister Toni

First this here is love of a charm.
My first sister - I miss you.
But you'll stay warm.
Independent at twelve
Ha, I realize that such beauty will always
Stay real.
Never gave a dude your body
Didn't die the heart.
They tell me two months in here
And then I will finally be home.
I'm the warrior of us
To do right by daddy wrongs.
I love you like a best friend.
A true Virgo you are -
Could make any body laugh and smile.
It's the way you are.
Far reaching even though so simple.
It came to this point and
We haven't been together for so many years.
Only a heart can cry tears.
Sweet dreams baby sis' I miss you
And remember my world will always be there
So that dreams wish
And our hearts live to prove it.
I love you sis'.

-Lil' Mainey The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Being in the halls is a test of sorts - test of your patience, will and mental strength. It is also an opportunity - to grow, learn and understand. It sounds like you really care about your sister and we are wondering if you let her know these things when you were on the outs or if these are the things you've realized you need to tell her since being locked up. Either way it is always important to let the people we love most how much we care for them, even if we think they already know it. More likely than not they do but it's always nice to hear. Twelve years old is a tough age so we hope that you are able to join her on the outs and maybe avoid some of the pitfalls of your younger days. No matter what never lose faith

We haven't been together
for so many years.
Only a heart can cry tears.
Sweet dreams baby sis' I miss you

How To Be A Kid

Just wishin' to be somebody,
Reachin' for a star to shine wit' me.
Maybe I grew up to be history
'Cause at 10 and now 17, I still don't think.
Bein locked up ain't meant for me.
Lookin' for help didn't teach me.
Makin' bad mistakes showed me
To learn them.
Only my dreams show me how I want to live
All just because I was never taught to be a kid.

-Lil' Mainey The Prince

From The Beat: This is a great piece - it really looks like you have used your poetry to examine how you have been living the life you have been living. So much of who we are and how we see the world is wrapped up in what we are taught growing up. This doesn't mean that we can't ever change because of what has happened us to when we are young but we have to recognize how and why we think the way we do. Keep looking deep inside yourself for answers - we know you are going to come out on top.

Unmitigated

She's bitter as warm wood
Sharp as two-edged swords.
Her beat goes down to death
Her steps lay hold of hell.
From the beginning we were seeing quietly.
No pity when said something that hurt me sincerely.
My past - she's not accepted one mistake.
Later such steps I cry remembering how much was achieved.
My mind accepts your disappearance
But yet my heart receives its last step.
My heart tries to regenerate
Knowing I'll never see you again.
Who I am is a secure passion
With left over feelings.
Now a separation.
Now my memory is selective.
Now my loneliness is unleashed.

-Lil' Mainey The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem speaks volumes in terms of love lost. It takes a lot to put yourself out there emotionally for the world to see so you should be proud of your poetry and its ability to connect with people through its honesty. We know that it is never easy to have people who you thought would always be a part of your life walk away, never to come back. While we all know it's a part of life, it just never feels good. But we do think that everything happens for a reason and you are still very young - you have a lifetime ahead of you and plenty of new people will no doubt be popping in along the way.

Lately

(dedicated to Sharde aka Baby'Moms)
i've been thinking a lot about you lately,
hoping you are out there safely
but maybe it's better for you and me
i've been dreaming about a lot lately
not knowing if I wanna have our second baby
i know it might sound crazy
but maybe it's better for you and me
i've been missing you a lot lately
missing the way you hold me, touch me
i know everybody can relate to me
but maybe it's better for you and me
i've been hurting a lot lately
knowing you care very much about me
when we're apart i feel terribly
because i'm away from that person who's special to me
but maybe it's better for you and me
i've been stressing a lot lately
hoping you are praying for me faithfully
i'm worried about you just like you're worried about me

but maybe it's better for you and me
i've been hoping a lot lately
that my days stay rainy
next year we will get married
then you will stay my lovin' darlin' lady
but maybe it's better for you and me
i've been thinking
dreaming
missing
hurting
stressing
and hoping a lot lately
because you saved me
but maybe it's better for you and me

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When we can turn our adversities into blessings, when from our mistakes we learn our lessons; when love denied grows only fiercer, when separation brings hearts nearer; when thoughtfulness replaces mere instinct, and responsibility inhabits love's precinct - dark nights are still illumined by the moon, and the sunshine of your love will warm your days soon. (As for baby number two, why hurry when baby number one's still a worry? First prove you can be baby number one's everyday, ever-lovin' daddy - stay free!)

Locked Up 'Cause I Messed Up

When you're locked up, you know you messed up. Maybe it was something little — hanging out with the wrong people, getting into an argument that went too far, saying something to a certain girl who you didn't know was that sensitive.

Or maybe it was something big — you had a problem with someone and a knife in your hand, or you did something bad when you were high, or... hell, I don't know. Maybe you like playing with kids a bit too much. Hey, that stuff happens. But how old were you when you did it? Old enough to be responsible for your actions, right? Exactly. And that's how you know when it's all on you.

-Ch

From the Beat: This is a very hard-hitting piece. Even though there may be many plausible explanations for bad behavior (mental illness, peer pressure, sexual compulsions, alcohol and/or drug dependency, bad role models, poverty, etc.), in the end responsibility for that bad behavior falls on the person who does it. From what you've written, it seems to us that you have learned an important lesson about consequences. We don't expect to see you here again!

Dying To Live Or Living To Die

Dying to live or living to die.
Two different paths you can take.
Right from left, wrong from right.
What path will you take?

-Stones

From the Beat: Isn't this the same question we asked you? Restating our question is fine — as long as you answer it. So, let's restate your question: What path will you take?

To My Mom: Nancy

In and out of these walls for the last four years
Never showed feeling, not even a tear
I'm tired of this place that became my second home
The coldest place and I'm always alone
I promised myself I would never return
But I broke that promise and I never could learn
I hurt so many different people by being away
Time goes by so slow, day-by-day
I've prayed so much and asked for God to forgive
I feel I can't help who I am and the way I live
How do I change my ways and keep to my word
I wish I could be free and fly like a bird
But is it even possible? Can it ever take place?
I look in the mirror every morning and see a disgrace
I want my mom to be proud and never ashamed
Because when I was born I was the one she named
I'm changing for me and the love of my life
My mother who believes and smiles so bright

-Tony

From The Beat: As we write this response, it's only three days before Mother's Day, so we think this piece is a great gift to give your mother. We can't imagine anything that she would like more (or anything she deserves more) than to have the love of her life safe and free. When you think about all that she has sacrificed for you from the very beginning, we hope it makes you see how much you owe her — and how it's in your hands to pay what you owe with your love. We're sorry you found it so hard to keep your word about not coming back here. We want you remember the pain you've already caused your mom and ask yourself if you want to be responsible for giving her even more. If you do that each time those temptations come your way (and they will), you should be able to exercise enough control to say one of the hardest words there is to say to a friend or homie, and that word is "No!"

I Want You To Know

You give me this feeling inside
That no matter what,
Everything is going to be all right

You give my heart a rush
Like seeing you has become a must
You're someone that I hellu trust
And I'm so happy we've been together
For these past months

-Pooky

From The Beat: You're lucky to have someone you trust to be with. Four months is not a long time, but it may be enough time to know that this is a very special person worth being with.

Taking Back Control Of My Life

I'ma die to live
So instead of trying to take
I'ma try to give
Forget this lifestyle
'Cause I'm tired of waking up with a frown
Instead of a smile
You ain't living life
If you're living in the fast lane
All that does is make you go insane
And to be stressed out your brain
Don't think of life as a race
'Cause then you'll end up on a high-speed chase
And come to this place
Which only messes with your dome
And now I wish I was home
Instead of feeling all alone

-John

From The Beat: We liked this piece so much, John, that we gave it our own title because we think that's really what you're saying. Of course you wish you were home, and you will be home. Getting there isn't the hard part, but staying there is. Whatever temptations or peer pressures got you here, they will still be there when you get home. We hope you think about this so that you feel prepared to say and do whatever you need to in order to avoid coming back here, or worse. We know you can do it, but only time will tell if you will do it or not.

Real Talk

People speakin' on me
Like they know me
Ninja you ain't my homie!
You don't know what I do
And you don't kick it with my crew
Keep my name out yo' mouth
'Cause I ain't speakin' on you
Why you hatin' on my game?
Don't get mad at me
Throwin' salt on my name
It's Young Royal, baby
And ain't shhh gon' change
I'ma keep doin' it live
Bes' believe I will
I'ma ball till I die
'Cause I talk talk that's real

-Young Royal

From The Beat: So now let us talk talk that's real. Are you ballin' now where you are, here in the hall? If the answer is no (and what else could it be?), then the belief "I'ma ball till I die" is nothing more than empty boasts, and not up to your standards of reasoning. There are all sorts of ways to interfere with a person's lifestyle that fall very far short of dying. We know people who lived out the thoughts you're expressing — until they were permanently stopped. They aren't dead, though; they're paralyzed, living in wheelchairs, dependent on others to feed them and wipe they ass! Don't worry so much about what others think or say about you, Young Royal. Use that brain of yours to think about yourself. We urge you to consider ALL the possible consequences of your acts before painting yourself into a rhetorical corner.

We Live To Die

It don't matter 'cause life is a dog, right?
Every day you try to live to the fullest and take a bite
But you wonder what could have happened before you to go sleep at night
You say you ain't afraid to die
But when the nine is in your head you begin to cry
You don't hesitate to start a fight
You just take flight
'Cause we live to die
And life is a dog, right?

-LT

From The Beat: You know, LT, life is what you make it. Yes, we're all born to die, but it's how we live between our birth and our death that defines life. Sometimes life is a dog, but sometimes it isn't. It's like love — it can cast you down into the depths and lift you up to the heavens. Being afraid to die is a sign of maturity, a sign that a person understands that life is the most precious gift of all. So yes, it does matter whether you're living to die or dying to live. At least it matters to us.

Why Am I In Here?

I don't know why. Because maybe I messed up at home with my parents, or I just did something really stupid. But now that I have been here in this place I have decided to change.

But they don't want to give me another chance. But it does not matter at the moment because I'm leaving on Monday the 24th and I'm going to a residential. And I'm going to be there for six months to a year. All I have to do is just do my time at residential and then go home.

-Johnathan

From The Beat: In one sense you are right. If you just do your time you will go home. But in another sense you're wrong. If you just do your time without taking advantage of it, without using it to move forward with your thinking and with your life, if you don't use the time to mature, then you're only setting yourself up for future failure. When you say you don't know why you're here, that might be one reason why "they" don't want to give you another chance. If you don't know why you're here, then what good would another chance be?

I want my mom to
be proud and never
ashamed
Because when I was
born I was the one
she named

Keepin' It Real

To me, keepin' it real is backing up what you say
 Being you every single day
 Express how you feel, be true to yourself
 Can't count on nobody else
 Being honest is a key factor in this life
 Everyone needs to do it, do I got to say it twice
 Keepin' it real is letting yo' girls know what's good
 Regardless if y'all at home or chillin' in the 'hood
 Let 'em know what they sayin' ain't right
 But it ain't bein' fake if you still got her back in a fight
 It's about being truthful and saying what you feel
 Speaking your mind and let the world know what's the deal
 Bein' true to yourself can get you real far
 But ya' bein' fake to the Lord if at nine ya at church and at twelve
 you at a bar
 Credibility is the key
 Keepin' it real is keepin' it real to me
 You can't be hard one minute then the next you scared
 Because in real life don't nobody care
 Can't be changing up 'cause the world changes enough
 But just because you stand up for what you believe don't mean
 you tough
 So everyone should express how they feel
 Be true to yourself and continue to keep it real

-Deonna

From The Beat: We like your simple, straightforward definition for keeping it real, and we really like the poetic way you were able to express it. We have a couple of questions, though. For example, why can't you be both hard and scared? Seems to us there are a lot of things to be scared of out there, whether you're hard or not. Also, we're curious about keeping it real with the Lord. We understand what you mean about the hypocrisy of going to church at 9 and the bar at noon, but what about other activities that go on in the 'hood. We don't know what you did to get here, but were you "bein' fake to the Lord" when you were doing it? What does the Lord want from you? Are you giving it?

My Pink Nightmare

I hate pink. Once I get out I will never wear pink again. It's pink, pink everywhere.

I look to the right, pink. I look to the left, pink. It's a freakin' pink nightmare. Oh pink! How I hate pink. Pink in the morning, pink in the evening, pink in my bed with me. Maybe in my sleep I'll leave this pink nightmare.

-I Hate Pink

From The Beat: Don't you think you'd get sick of any color that someone else made you wear? In other words, is it the color pink you hate or the fact that you have no choice in the matter? Regardless, we hope you never have to wear another pink thing as long as you live!

I'm Sick

I'm sick of looking at these walls
 I'm sick of walkin' down these halls
 I'm sick of people telling me what to do
 I'm sick of not speakin' my opinion
 I'm sick of people talkin' shhh
 I'm sick of people callin' me a snitch
 I'm sick of people tellin' me when to sleep
 I'm sick of getting hours for dumb shhh
 I'm sick of the staff and their power trips
 I'm sick of this life
 I'm sick of this place
 I'm sick of this
 And in the end,
 I'm sick of probation

-Gina

From The Beat: We're not surprised that you're sick of all this. The system is designed to make you sick of it. But what are the things that lead you here? Couldn't "the system" write its own poem about being sick of the illegal things you do? In other words, are you sick enough of everything here to change your act out there? The things you're sick of will never change. Only you can make the changes you want by changing yourself, and in doing that, avoid the system altogether. We hope you can.

Tell The Truth

If you don't like me then keep it real an' tell me
 If you talking shhh about me then keep it real an' say it to my face
 If you hatin' on me then keep it real
 If you don't like what I'm wearin'
 Or how I be dressin' then keep it real
 If you jealous of me then keep it real an' stop being fake!
 All I gotta say is don't hate, appreciate...nah mean

-Lil' Mary J

From The Beat: Do you always follow your own advice? Do you always tell people exactly what you think, or do you sometimes not say things to avoid negative reactions? "Don't hate, appreciate" is great advice that we'll try to follow.

My Actions Remind Me It's All On Me

I often am reminded by my actions when I know it's really all on me. When I see myself not caring about school. Not doing homework. Just thinking about fun. I think about what I'm doing to get to where I want to be. I want to have a good job and make a lot of money so that I can have a nice house. But when it hits me I realize that in order for me to do all of that I need to go to school and do my work, because my mom isn't always going to be there to give me money, feed me, or buy me clothes.

One day it's all going to end up that I'm going to have to be independent and do everything on my own. It's exciting when I think about me on my own because then no one is there to tell me what to do, like when to be home. But I also get scared because there are bills to be paid and things to handle all on my own.

My mom is the only one who's taught me everything I know. Living at home with her and my three sisters I've seen responsibility, maturity, but never took into consideration that I should do the same. When it's all on you, it's up to you. You can't blame nobody, gotta help yourself, do your own thing 'cause it's all on you.

-Nani

From The Beat: We know what you mean that looking ahead to being independent is both thrilling (you get to make your own decisions) and scary (you HAVE TO make your own decisions). When a young person writes that she's scared about the responsibilities of adulthood, then we know she is about to become a responsible adult, because only a child would not be worried about taking care of herself. This doesn't mean that everything will be smooth sailing (whose life is always a smooth sail?), but it does mean that we think you are thinking more like an adult than a child, and that's all to the good.

Livin' The Life, Havin' To Change

I do what I do 'cause that's what I chose to do. I kick it on the block 'cause that's what I love to do. Holdin' it down with my patnahs, getting' hyphy, goin' dumb, not givin' a damn, already knowin' I'ma get locked up.

Doin' time ain't never fazed me, but this time I'm goin' crazy. Seeing my brother every day, knowin' I can't talk to him 'cause we locked up kills me every day. Shhh, I even started to pray that one day me and my brother are goin' to be together again. He bein' sent away and I got a child on the way. I gots to say I know me and my big brah is gonna change our ways.

-Raquel

From The Beat: We find it hard to put your first paragraph together with your second paragraph. In the first, you seem to be saying that you don't care about the consequences, you're going to do what you want anyway. (Which means we'll be seeing a lot more of you in the hall...) But then you end your second paragraph by committing yourself (and your brother) to change. So which is it, Raquel? Will you keep doing what pleases you regardless, or will you make some changes that allow you to stay free — 'cause you definitely can't be doing the things you love to do when you're locked up, can you?

... I need to go to school and do my work, because my mom isn't always going to be there to give me money, feed me, or buy me clothes.

Streets

The streets is shady
 The streets is what made me
 But I love the streets
 'Cause the streets is what pays me
 I peeled so many caps my friends look at me
 strangely
 It's time to leave
 Hollah at you in the next one Beat

-V-Slick

From The Beat: How slick can you be, V? Have you looked around to see where you are? Have you checked out the spacious cell you're living in? Have you noticed that there are only boys showering with you, or that you're wearing someone else's draws? If this is the payment the streets gave you, then we're happy we're not getting your salary.

On My Mind

What's on my mind is getting' out of this place soon.
 I can't wait to get out of this spit on room
 I'm 18 in this young men's place
 I wanna get out to get my own space
 I can't even talk to or look at a young lady's face
 I need some freedom away from these locked down bars
 I look out my window and see no one for me in these cars
 I hate this place and I ain't comin' back
 And I don't care what people say
 'Cause that's a fact

-SH

From The Beat: Congratulations, SH, for looking out that window and seeing that you never want to look out it again! What specific changes do you anticipate making in your life to make sure you keep this promise?

Why Would You?

What's up with guys and their pathetic damn lies!
All they do is break our trust... what is it they got against us?
One minute they're willing to give their life up for you
The next minute they don't want nothin' to do with you
The one who gives you that exciting feeling inside
The one who makes you cry in the middle of the night.
The one who did anything and everything to make you happy
The one who's tryin' to do whatever he can to make sure you livin' life crappy

The one who would wipe your tears
Now he acts as if he doesn't care
The one who spent hours talking on the phone with you in the summer

Now tell me why he went and got a new number
Always talking about hittin', and that's why your relationship turned to shhh!

Why would you do this to someone you said you loved?
Why would you promise her everything if you knew it would be just a meaningless fling?
I can tell you one thing...

When she said I love you, she meant it
She'll never forget your relationship and all the things you made her have to deal with
Why does love have to hurt? You stupid-ass jerks!

-Lil' Sniffles

From The Beat: It's true that a lot of young men treat women in ways which they would never tolerate if someone tried to treat them like that. We're not sure why this is, but one thing to remember is that boys get socialized by older boys (who call themselves men), and they teach these values of sexual conquest as if that's just the way the world works, because that's what they were taught when they were boys. We think the only solution to this problem lies with mothers teaching their sons that 000 girls and women are equal to men and boys, and that to treat them with the kind of disrespect you describe here is simply not what being a man is all about. We aren't holding our breath that this will happen, but at least you can make it happen in your own family if and when you become the mother of a son.

Down For More Of The Same

What's my definition of keepin' it real?

Livin' life based on a pill
I ain't snitchin' so the DA ain't cuttin' a deal
Stacking my grits tryna get close to a mil
And now I'm locked up
This shhh ain't tight
Can't find a lawyer to plead my rights
Used to post on a corner late at night
Now I'm writin' to The Beat, havin' fantasies
Got no roommate so I stamp my feet
Waitin' for the day I hit the streets
Hatas think they want this beef
Hide my emotions by smoking these green leaves
Taught not to cry so my heart just bleeds
But I'm down 'till I die and this is

-J-Rezzy

From The Beat: We have such mixed emotions about this piece, J-Rezzy. On the one hand we hate that you think your fortune lies in the streets, dodging bullets and the cops (because we know where that leads). We even had to take out one of your poetic lines because it came across as a threat (and we had to change the ending of another line because... well, you know why). But on the other hand, we have to tell you that you have superior word skills that tell us you don't have to be doing what you're doing and risking what you're risking. Not everybody has mental gifts that allow them the choices you could make because you've got the brains to see beyond today. It pains us, therefore, to see the choice you say you're down for. We're not sure if you're keeping it totally real (like, we bet that you do cry, even if you were taught not to), but we're being as real with you as we know how to be: Being "down till you die" is a prescription not for being down but for being under — under the thumb of the probation department, under the control of counselors, under the threat of jail and prison, under clean sheets in a hospital with multiple gunshot wounds, or even under six feet of earth. What a waste of great human potential!

Bye-Bye

Yay! I'm getting' released tomorrow. Bye-Bye Hillcrest. Bye-Bye pink shirts, blue pants, and slippers. Bye-Bye small rooms with locked doors. Bye-Bye to my decided agenda, five-minute showers and countless hours in my room. Shhh, just Bye-Bye Hillcrest.

-Guess Who

From The Beat: Bye-bye, Kristin. We hope you take this person: Don't come back! (Oh yeah, and good luck.)

Dying To Live

Since I can remember when I started middle school, I was always trying to get by and get through life the easy way out. I went to a school with a bunch of creepy white rich kids and I always wanted to have a loving family, have good-looking clothes and have life so good and everything right in front of them.

At a young age I started drinking, smoking drugs, getting into a bad lifestyle. There would be nights I'd never go home, always spending time with my BF (baby's father) than giving the love to my momma like she deserves. All that I ever wanted was my life back to normal and give my momma an easier life. I always felt that someone stole my life and I would have done anything to get it back. I was chasing something I already had but I didn't know. I was my own enemy. Stay up and don't let your enemies faze you.

-Chinita

From The Beat: We wonder why it takes something as serious as this for young people as smart as you are to realize that by looking for greener pastures, you walk farther and farther away from the pastures you're already in. We don't know what your home life was like when you were a child (or what it's like now), but we're curious what you think caused you to start drinking, smoking and getting in a bad lifestyle at so early an age. (By the way, we bet that among those "creepy white rich kids" there was more than one whom you might have found to be decent friends, if you'd given them a chance; but then, maybe we're wrong.)

Deciding To Change... It's On Me

Hey, what's up Beat? I used to remember when my PO would come to my school and check up on me. She used to always give me lectures about how I need to bring my grades up, come to school on time and not cut class. I used to tell her I would change, I would do better, things weren't going to be the same and stuff like that.

She would always lock me up for little things like dirty pee tests and probation violations. But one day I decided to commit burglary and her recommendation was 96 days in juvi. So right after court they booked me in right there and I didn't feel bad about it at first. But after three days went by I realized that I was hurting my family, myself, and my future. So I finally took responsibility for what I've done and I made a change to not come back here anymore. And that's when I knew it was all on me!

-Zuno

From the Beat: Do you think it was the length of time you had to do here, or just the fact that you were here at all, that made you want to make the change you now want to make? What was it about the experience that took the child's blinders off your eyes and replaced them with an adult's vision? Well, whatever it was, we want to give you props for realizing, before it's too late, that it's all on you, and that you can do it!

You're Living To Die

You're living to die, just to get high
You carry a gun, just to have fun
You get hella drunk and end up in some funk
You're always after your rivals
When you should be at home reading your Bible
You always hurt the people you love
When before you know they'll be up above
You're always looking for money to spend
You'll go so far as betraying your friends
You never go to school 'cause you think you're cool
But you'll just end up a homeless fool
You take life as a joke
And you'll end up getting smoked
You'll end up in jail with no chance of bail
You abandoned your kid for what you stupidly did
Now you're behind bars and realized you went too far
You're living life in the fast lane
Filling those around you with heartache and pain

-Corrine And Valerie

From The Beat: If this poem is an example of a collaborative effort between the two of you, then the two of you should do more writing together. This is a terrific poem, both in the message it conveys and in the way the message is delivered. There is not a single word in this piece with which we can disagree. All we can add is that we hope the two of you know how profound and true what you've written is, so that you will follow your own prescription for the future.

The one who
would wipe your tears
Now he acts
as if he doesn't care

What I Miss

I miss everything! The hood, my loved ones, my family everything, it can be the lil'est thing but I miss it. Like hearing the faucet drip late night.

What I really miss is postin' on the block blowin' trees, and kickin' it with my loved ones, with 40oz or 32's on the side forlater.

-Bianca

From The Beat: Hearing the faucet drip—it's amazing the things we can miss. Even stuff that we may not notice when we're around. Loved ones especially, and doing the little things we do when we're with them. You're going to have to find some new past times, other than what you mentioned in the piece, when you get out, otherwise your sure to be missing those things all over again.

Tellin' The Truth

To tell the truth there's many different ways on "keepin' it real." Keepin' it real can be telling the truth and not worried about what the next person has to say, about what you said. Another way... (to be continued.)

-Tt

From The Beat: Well, we sure would like to hear the rest of what you have to say...maybe next time. It's true that telling the truth is important, but it's not always easy. Do you always keep it real? Are there times when you feel forced by circumstances not to?

Missing Plenty

I miss my bed at home, my mom and talking on the phone. Eating a lot out of my kitchen, looking at T.V., my loved ones.

I miss my friends, cousins, kickin' it late night going to the movies partying, doing what I wanted to do and sleeping until whenever I wanted to and I could listen to the radio when I wanted to.

-Niota

From The Beat: The freedom to do what we want, when we want to is something we often take for granted. Hopefully soon you'll be back in those places with those people and things you love.

I Miss Family

I miss my grandma and my mom and brothers. I miss my grandma and my mom and brothers. I miss going home every night with my grandma. I miss my friends. I miss my dog, and my boyfriend Louis.

-Jasmine

From The Beat: Family and friends are what can sometimes keep everything together for us...we hope when you get out you stay out and enjoy their company.

Lil' Puerto Rico

Baby this is the only way I'll be able to let you know how I feel I feel about you. Baby boy I just don't know now how to put it in to words for how much I love you! You mean the world to me. It hurt me so much when they took me away from you baby, you make me so happy just knowing that your mine.

-Lil' Shorty

From The Beat: Way to tell him how you feel. Next time leave The Beat out of it!

Don't Be A Fake

My definition of keepin' it real would be... don't act fake! Period point blank! You ain't got to lie to kick it.

When you don't keep it real and lie, you're not only lying to people but to yourself, and then not only that but you gotta keep up with all your lies and if not you'll end up getting all caught up so like I said, you ain't gotta lie to kick it!

-Bianca

From The Beat: It's hard to find out that people are lying to be cool, and of course we wish that they didn't do it. One thing to remember is that sometimes when people lie it's because they're feeling insecure and uncomfortable about something real. Compassion is hard to have in situations like these, but sometimes it makes us better individuals.

What's Up Beat

This Bianca dropping a few! Let me start this off by sending my utmost love and respect to all my loved ones doin' time behind these grimy ass cement walls. Damn, the cops are pickin' everybody up out on em streets, huh? Well shhh I'm doin' 'coo' I can't complain.

Usually I be writing six/ or seven different pieces, but today it's just a couple. I don't know what to write on and don't have much to say.

To all my loved ones: Keep ya heads up and remain solid.

-Bianca

From The Beat: We look forward to hearing more next time. As for your statement about the cops picking people up off the streets, well, what does that tell you? It tells us this game too many young people are playing is all bad. Time to change up!

Staying True

My idea of keepin' it real is staying true to your self. And staying solid to yourself and making sure you don't put on no fronts and try to make yourself look better in front of someone, like a few females I know and in front of someone else it's like their like new people like they convinced themselves it was the truth.

But me being who I am I don't put people on blast, I just stay to myself and make sure I'm keepin' it real with myself, and staying solid for me.

-Young's Wife

From The Beat: Good for you. A lot of us have been in situations in which we feel out of place or like we need to act a certain way to get by. It's hard to stay true to oneself all the time, so you must be pretty strong.

You Gotta Respect It

I'm a hitter
Cold spitter
I'm a criminal

But you gotta respect it because I'm an original
Hollow tips will split yo' wig
No matter if you a man or a kid

So you better be cool when you come through the block

Never know when you gonna get popped
Because everyone wanna try out they new chop
But you just gotta make sure you and the one get shot

Everybody got problems but who's there to solve 'em. Everybody wants to get rich so they go get a revolver. Somebody got robbed so I guess they solve 'em. Then somebody got shot so I guess there's another problem.

-Dave

From The Beat: What's amazing about this piece, Dave, is that you start off as just one of a million mc's spoutin' about your hood and how dangerous it is, you even sound like you're in love with the idea of it and want to be a ghetto celebrity. But then about halfway you through the poem, you pull a Tupac, suddenly becoming a ghetto commentator, taking a step back and teaching about what is going on in the hood to make it such a terrible place to be: you analyze like an expert with something to teach: no one knows how to get money so they reach for the gun, but that doesn't help and it just leads to more shooting.

What I Miss About Home?

I miss everything to my family, my clothes, my bed, my dog. Just everything, me and my stuff.

-Rachael

From The Beat: What do you miss about those things? We want to hear more—details!

EPA (East Palo Alto)

The game ain't the same
In the hood
In my hood
Cops and snitches
Speakin' in yo' name
Since '92

We been through a change
Fools on the block playin'
Tryin' to make they name
City of EPA

You could catch it close range
Bullets ain't got no name
I'm still thuggin' from the streets
Real solids don't change
Get mo' smarter
Everything still the same
Get mo' deeper

For yo' actions you get blame
Responsibility
It's just part of the game
Some say it's over
Some say it's pain
Changes and changes
The game ain't the same

-DJ

From The Beat: It's hard to tell where you stand in this poem, DJ? Do you see the game as pain? Do you plan to take responsibility for your part in it? Is your ambition to "get mo' deeper?" From what we've seen of your writing, you could do better than that!

Get On With My Life

Two days until my deposition hearing. I hope I get out so I can get on with my life. The things I miss most is probably my family and my dog and bike riding. Those are the things I think about every night in here.

OK, my family is not just my mom or brother or anything like that. It is the closest people in my life. Its probably the most I miss. I know my parents miss me and it's hard for them to be in here. SO I hope I get out on EM or home sup. I also consider my dog as my family too, because she is always there for me when I need someone.

Alright, bike riding is my hobby. It's pretty much all I do in my spare time (in between school and work) and it's another thing I miss dramatically. That's basically what is keeping me out of trouble.

I'm in here for some stuff that happened long ago. I don't do anything bad anymore.

-Steven

From The Beat: We hope that by the time this piece is printed, you're back home with your family (and your dog), and you're back to bikeriding, back to school, back to work. Good luck!

No Regrets For Doing My Crimes

I will "never" regret doing my crimes because everything I've done is for one main reason and that's survival.

Everybody knows money makes the world go round and if you ain't got none you ain't got nothing period! So regardless how you get it of what you do what you do to get it, do what you got to do and be the best at what you do! 'Cause it ain't no reason to be slackin' in yo mackin' or slippin' in yo' pimpin' 'cause if you is, then you need to get a new hustle cause what you doin' ain't you: or if it is you then you seriously need to step yo' game up cause you ain't going to get spit playing half ass in this game we call life.

Regardless if you on the block or on the blade you always going to have to stay on yo' p's and q's other wise you gone come up short, dead, or in jail and that's just real. Basically I don't regret what I did but how I was slippin' which got me back in here. But I ain't trippin' 'cause when I get out I am still goin' to be that bad-ass brown beauty I was when I walked up in here but the only difference is I'll be a little older, badder, and wiser!

Just keep yo' head up and stay strong. I'm out.

-Angela

From The Beat: How will you avoid "slippin'" again once you get out? It seems to us that the life-style you describe is bound to get you caught up again. The question we always ask is: is it worth it?

RIP Davon and Jay-Jay

My ninjas, what's up, the streets missin' y'all, I ain't gon' lie. The hood ain't the same without y'all. Ninjas done lost they mind, we in the streets handlin' our business ridin' this shh out nowadays ninjas can't mess wit us.

I'm gonna get real, we miss our ninjas, and this shhh gets worse every day. If my ninjas were here the hood would be different. It would be nicer fo' us, but fo' other ninjaz, it'd be ugly. They gotcha boy in this unit, yey I'm gon' end this like this: RIP Da'von and Jay Jay.

-Mar-Mar

From The Beat: Each week, you write about how much you miss Da'von and Jay Jay... but we wonder if you understand that their deaths will be pretty much in vain if you don't learn from what happened to them. It's this street life, what you call "handlin' business", "ridin' shhh out" that takes so many lives each year. Who will it be next time? When are you going to realize that there's no way to beat this game?

Missing Everything And Then Some

What do I miss about home? Everything. I miss my family, my street family, my female, even the smell of my house. I miss having to clean my toilet after it over flows. Like I said I miss everything 'cause that meant I was free.

-Scotty

From The Beat: Funny the things we take for granted and the little things in life that drive us crazy till we realize that they represent something larger, something more important. Like with the toilets - no doubt on the outs that was a pain in the butt but it represents something larger like your freedom. Don't let another opportunity pass you by - you have learned how to appreciate the little things. Now make sure you learn how to appreciate the big things.

Ready to Go

Check me out. I hate this jail shhh. I'm ready to get my g-pass and go back. I miss my family, my spot, my money, my baby mama. I don't feel these fake ninjas. Straight up, fast. I really miss my squad and family. I'm trying to get out but this my fourth time here and it might be wrap. I better be at my little bra [Lil' Meech] candle light. RIP Lil Meech.

My mama is the only one. My dad been gone since I was seven. RIP Anthony Shaw.

In jail it's hella fake ninjas always talkin' but ain't never bust no real move. But to keep it solid I go to court on April 28th, and I'm keeping it solid. I'm on one!

-Theither

From The Beat: You've been through it, there's no way around it. All these deaths, including losing the most important man in your life when you were just seven. But now you will get this chance (hopefully) to get out of jail and stay out. You have a baby on the way, you have the love of your mom, you have groups in Oakland that can support you, ask your PO or ask The Beat - are you sure "on one" is really what you want?

What I See

When I look out my windows period, I see a lot of things going. I see shootings, drug dealers, good kids going to school. I see people who remind me of so much. I be so high, I just be thinking about all the shhh you a never think of. I be on one. I do no playing. Forget looking out these cell windows. I'm on my way home.

-Theither

From The Beat: Man, Theither, this time around, try not to be so high when you look out your window. You of all people know it's a cruel world out there, and you need your wits about you to stay on top of it. You need to be sharp, operating at 100%!

What I'm Missing

What do I miss about being home? I miss being wit' my team; I miss postin' wit' my boys; I miss going bad on a few ninjas a day.

But most of all, I miss that stuff my mom used to cook! Just like every ninja in here, I know you wish you could have some home-cooked meal, or something besides this messed-up county food. I also miss my bed, because this county bed be hurtin' my back. But the thing I miss most about my bed is what I do in my bed.

I also miss my lil' brothers. Don't be like me! Love ya, lil' brah.

-Baby Mo

From The Beat: You can't write about how much you miss posting up and going bad with your "boys" - then expect your brother to feel you when you advise him not to be like you. You need to show him, through what you say, think and do! So if you want to show your little brothers some love, make changes in you!

RIP Lil Meech.

What's good bra! Bra I just want you to know it's some ninjas keeping it solid and some not. Straight up. Bra, me and them other ninjas kept this g-shhh lit for you. Bra, we miss you. Bra' we still on one, bangin'. Bra I'm gon' ride this G-shhh out. I'm doin' time. Gone but not forgotten: I love you bra! RIP Lil Meech.

-Theither

From The Beat: We've asked you this before, and we'll ask again: Are you sure that the best way to honor the people who've died is to continue living the kind of life that killed them?

Hi The Beat,

I am back again I got detained at court. I go to court May 9th and hopefully I will be out of here.

To me it is hard, I cry everyday I look at theses four walls. I don't like jail at all I came back because I wasn't in school so I got detained I am just ready to go home because time goes by slow.

-Jasmine

From The Beat: When we wish it would speed up, time slows; when we wish it would slow, it speeds up. Good luck May 9th, and stay in school this time!

Using My Mind

What I miss about home the most is that when I wake up at any time in the day I can always go back to sleep. I'm always getting told what to do in here, it ain't cool. I also miss all my family and friends that is also including my girlfriend. I also miss what my mind tells me to do. What I mean by that is when I used to think the right way that's when I used my mind but a couple weeks before I was incarcerated I wasn't using my mind that much, that's why I'm in here right now.

-Jeremiah

From The Beat: That's a great way to put it: "using my mind". So if you were on the outs, right now, what would you be doing if you were using your mind? Can you write

I Miss My Best Friend Keara

Man, what's up. Yo, this yo' boy Lil' Bugga. Yeah, I'm still here, and still doin' this dead time. I'm tired of being up in here. I'm ready to come back home with my one and only best friend Keara. I miss her hecka much, she stay on my mind all day every day. We been away from each other way too long.

As long as I got her in my life I'm gon' be cool. She is the only best friend I got and the only one I need. I love her with my heart and always will to the day I die. It's gon' always be Lil' Bugga and Keara, best friends always and forever. I'm just ready to come back home with her. I couldn't even be home for her birthday. I was hurt. But I'm about to let this one... slide on ice

-Lil' Bugga

From The Beat: Nice shout out to Keara. You know what our next question will be - is this a relationship where she's a positive influence on you, and helps you stay out of trouble? Are you a positive influence on her? Do you help HER stay out of trouble? That's what true friendship is, bringing each other up, and helping them be the best they have inside. Can you say that about this relationship? If so, tell us how!

Same Topic Different Visit

I picked this topic because I remember last time I was here y'all gave us this same topic

But lookin out my cell window I can't see nothing 'cause you cant see out the window

Except the brightness of the sun and maybe my reflection.

-Scotty

From The Beat: After being around for years and years, we admit sometimes our topics get "recycled." But what we don't like to see is the same faces coming in and out of the halls.

In The Navy

Let my mom talk me into going to the Navy if the judge doesn't give me a strike. They'll let me go to a program to finish my GED studies. So if they do let me go, I am going to have to get use to saying, "Sir yes sir."

-Scotty

From The Beat: Maybe the Navy will be a great opportunity for you to establish some good habits, get away from the chaos of your neighborhood and offer you an education. It won't be fun but it could be just what you need.

Front Window

What's up wit' it? This is Lil' Juanito comin' at you from up in here. Now first off, my bolo is gonna be parked at Kragens facin' the hood liquor store. Now from the windshield you see the loved ones postin' it up in front and on the side of the street. Across the street you see all the dope fiends at the gas station... and now you lookin' at the drivers. (to be continued)

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: We're waiting on part two - use those eyes that see every detail, use that voice that knows how to tell a story, and make us see the world as Lil' Juanito sees it. The world according to you. That's what Art is all about: Make us see it.

Risha Is The Bomb

My name is Risha
And I'm the bomb
And I'm going to stay bomb stay
Always will be the bomb

-Risha

From The Beat: Okay, you're the bomb! BaBooom!

What I'm Missin'

I miss everything about being home! - the fact that I'm free and able to roam! I miss all the good food from my home! I miss my room and sleepin' in my own bed!

I miss my family a lot! And I miss the outs! I miss the parties, miss the females! I miss having freedom! I miss my clothes! I miss all my patnas! I miss that money in my pocket! I miss all them cars I had! I miss my Jordans! I miss the life I had! But soon, I'll be free - soon, I'll be back.

-No Name

From The Beat: Yeah, you will be back on the out and free soon enough, but you need to see that walking out of here free is not much unless you know how to stay that way. Make your money legally, so when you're living regally (now that you know what's really valuable) - you free as you want to be!

RIP Baby Willie: Memories

What's up baby boy you know I miss you, we were cool, hella tight, and I never dissed you. I'm goin' to always remember you, man you my cousin.

Remember we used to go to the donut shop in the morning and get a dozen. Remember we use to talk for hours on the phone. Remember we used to roost ninja's domes. Remember all those good and fun times we had, man I can't believe you're 6- feet, damn, that's sad.

Remember we hit a licked man, we was bad, I still can't believe your 6- feet man. I'm mad.

-Lamarr

From The Beat: Your sadness is deep and real, it's so hard to lose a friend. But to avoid losing more friends, maybe you should think about whether all those "good and fun times" led to his young death. Are you putting yourself and your friends in danger with your decisions about what's fun? Keep it real!

Poem Me Without You

Me without you is like a Q with out a U.

I couldn't see myself without you,

easy as can be

we go together like peanut butter and jelly.

You know lobster and shrimp.

cool-aid and chicken, and that's the way we're living.

Me without you, I don't know what to do.

Me without you, I'm so lonely and blue.

Me without you, my world would come to an end if I didn't have you.

-C-Baby

From The Beat: You're lucky to love someone so much, C-Baby! We hope you get out soon so you can be with your special friend again.

Missing My family

What I miss about home is my mom and my brother and sisters. I miss smelling fresh air. When I look out my window I see a clean earth by my house.

-Dominic

From The Beat: Beautiful imagery, Dominic. Fresh air is a symbol of freedom.

Up In Camp

Man, what's up y'all? This Mond. Man, I'm up in Camp dealin' with this fake noise. Man, these ninjas tryin' a work me for my home pass, and now I can't go home for Mother's Day! Man, I feel like I'm a get to groovin' with movin' — so if you don't hear from me next week in The Beat, then you already know.

-Mondi

From The Beat: When you wrote this, Mother's Day weekend was still two weeks away. If you just stayed positive and did the good program, you never know what might have happened — but get all negative in your thinking and behavior, and run: well, that's no kind of Mother's Day present to take home. Ya feel? We hope by the time you read this you can say, "Nah, I kept it real and didn't run." Ya feel?

What I Miss

The things that I miss about home are my family and homeboys. I know if I didn't have my family I don't know what I would do, I could be out all day doing dirt, but I don't, because I think about my mom and my sisters.

-Lil' Bizzy

From The Beat: It's great that your mom and sisters inspire you to be safe. You are lucky to have that. We want to push you though to also think about yourself, and to stay safe because you love yourself and you want to live a long life. The time is now to get out of the system!

The First Time Coming To The Hall

My first time coming to the hall I came for strong arm robbery for like a month and half and got out on EM for a month and went back to same shhh, started selling coke, getting my dough from shooting dice to stealing cars and robbing people, to going to jail.

Now I'm in here doing time for my first dope case.

-Lil' Dee

From The Beat: So you've told us how it is, but can you tell us why it is? Don't BS us, keep it real! Why are you using these methods to get money? Are you taking care of family? Are you attracted to the glamour of gold teeth and rims? Is it a combination of both? Tell us the reasons why you keep going and why you can or can't stop. The time is now to get up out of the trap!

Bullet Talk

It's a shot of life and death

When you pull the trigger you might regret

The decision you tried to make

Was it good or was it safe?

But once it's all done

You watch your back for a second gun

Hoping its not you

On somebody's list when their ready to shoot

Now you're in the house

Waitin' for it to cool down so you can go out

So you don't get caught up

Shot up

By them boys

Or your ex- friend's patnas

So now I'm askin' ya'll

To cock back and let the bullet fall

'Cause you don't want to hear about your siblings on the death log

"Yeah what's up Beat, this is your boy young loony kickin' one to ya hopefully not me but someone else can read this in your books."

-Rakeem

From The Beat: You've got the talent with words to tell some powerful stories and ask important questions for your community, Rakeem. What's your plan upon leaving the hall?

Going Back and Forth

What's up Beat? This is your boy Young Chuck. Before I get started on today's topic I want to extend my love to everyone doing time behind these walls, and to all my homies doing time. What's up, how we all doing? Hope and pray y'all doing good and pimpin' this system.

To Juanito, Shorty, and Lil Crazy the only homies that I know that are doing time right now. Homies what's up how ya'll been? Hope and pray ya'll doing good.

Yeah I made my own topic; "Going back and forth," started up in one unit, worked my way up to max, now I'm in this youngsta unit. Shhh, I feel hella old in this place. Everyone is 13,12,15, years old lil' BG's, I'm up in this unit 'cause I got sentenced to camp, I'm on the waiting list, and the next unit is full, so they put me up in this youngsta unit. I ain't mad, I'm a worker so I'm out all day, but I can't wait till I get sent to camp.

All I got to say is keep y'all heads up high. All this kicking, banging on the walls, that shhh ain't gonna get you nowhere but that room time list. Do your time don't let the time do you. Act like a grown man!

-Young Chuck

From The Beat: You're sharing some valuable advice with Beat readers, this week. It's hard to be the elder in a situation but it's also a great opportunity to see how wise and mature you are, and to see how far you've come since your younger days. What's the plan to staying out?

What Are The Things I like... On The Outs

Hi my name is James and I like to go out to eat on the Outs and I like to go shoppin' on the Outs and I like to stay with my family on the Outs and I like to be funny on the Outs and on the Outs I don't like to have friends on the Outs, but like to have money on the Outs and I like to have a girlfriend while I'm on the Outs and I always be happy like everyone else on the Outs.

-James

From The Beat: James you're funny, on the Outs — and special on the inside.

Glad To Be Here

This is another day that the Lord has made for us, and I'm glad about it! What about you? I told y'all I was going to Camp, and now I'm here.

The PO said that if I have a good program, I will do just five months, or maybe five and a half. And I know God is still here with me. My pastor taught me, it is good to be anywhere if the Lord allowed you to wake up this morning.

But what I'm trying to say is that even though I don't want to be here, I'm glad that I'm here because I could be on the outs walking or doing whatever and gotten shot and killed — but at least I'm safe here. But I got to remember when God says it's time, then it is time to go with him. But I just wanted to share my thoughts about being here at camp and how I know that God is still here with me. God said that He will never leave me or forsake me. God bless!

-Rev. Do

From The Beat: Here's what we want you to think about: When God says it's time for you to change what you say and do, from the inside out, by cleansing your heart and mind by the power of your faith — by becoming the young man God brought you into the world to be, doing right and staying free. God is calling you to do right every day he brings the sun up in the morning and the stars out at night. So don't just wait for this time to pass, use it — get into class and learn, volunteer for work, and when you get out — get a j-o-b for you money.

The Big Miss

What do I miss?

To be honest,

really nothing

but goin' to school

kickin' it wit' my baby

my uncles,

brothas and my cousins

'cause I just do

family and postin' with my girl

'cause she been down wit' me for the

longest

so I'll probably jus stop

the bullshhh and stay down with her

'cause when you got a female

you got to keep her...

to be continued...

-Lil' S Boy

From The Beat: Loyalty is an important quality in love and friendship, we're glad you recognize that and your girl will be lucky to have you if that's how you really see it.

If Only You Knew (First Verse)

I wish you knew

How much I love you boo

I adore you

I put no one above you, boo

My heart is for you

And that is the truth

I put your wealth

Before my health

Because I'm loving you

I'm down for you

And always have been

And I must admit now

That you are my best friend

Through thick and thin

We in the win

Pushin' a Benz

Stackin' dividends

We are the best of friends

We been through it all

From jail to bad weather

But through all the bull and drama

We still keep it together

We still doin' it big yeah

Ri-Ri and Smooth

And all the love I have for you

I wish you only knew...

-Ri-Ri

From The Beat: Very sweet Ri-Ri. Looking forward to part two.

To All the Fakes, Just Keep It Real

Part One:

See, it ain't about bein' hard. It's about bein' smart. Don't try to be me; be you 'cause all you doing is making yo'self look like a fool. You crack jokes and we don't laugh wit' you; we sittin here laughing at you. Do people do this because they didn't get attention at home. They shouldn't be worried about getting attention when they darn near grown!

See, it ain't about being hard. Its about bein' smart. He say he got that and he say he got this, but when reality hits — they ain't got shhh. Follow — that's all some people know how to do. You gotta be a leader and play your own role. Don't worry about what people say, just be yo'self and stay in your place. I don't trust what I hear, 'cause some people be yappin' off at the mouth with the "she say, he say" bull. Some people lie just so they can spark up a conversation on that fake stuff, while all in my ear they telling me lies. I ain't tryin to hear that! So do it movin' with all that riff-raff trash!

They be speakin' on my name and don't even know me — probably heard about me. But when you see me, dispense with tellin' me them lies. If you lyin', you flyin' — roller skate until you hit the Golden Gate. This just ended, by bein' smart. You feel me?

Part Two:

See, it is like this. In my life, I ain't no gangsta, and I ain't no super-thug — and ain't no neighborhood fairy nor do I stand in front of the store, loitering. See, I don't put women up on the corner like the next man that will turn around and kiss them on the mouth.

I'm'a keep it solid with you. I'm simple, like a white-head pimple. But you can't predict what my next move is. I see right through you, because you're just a Hollywood actor. I'll just wait until your show comes out to Blockbuster, 'cause I got a free rental.

-Reese Butter Cup

From The Beat: It's sad that this last entry of yours in our pages, at least until you write us from The Beat Without, has got to be about haters in the hall, 'cause even though there are people who are doing everything you say and it can get on your nerves — there are so many more important things to think about and say to others in our pages. They're not going to change, or even if one does, others will take his place. It's the nature of game that brings people like that to jail, juvenile and otherwise. You need to focus on staying out of jail. We're glad you don't indulge in all that puerile and vile pimp talk that so many do. That's a good thing. But differentiating yourself from those losers, isn't enough — you've got to figure out what are your personal temptations to mess up, and then stay vigilant — and free!

My New Life

I think about my kids and my life — I thing that keeps me motivated and keeps me on my toes. To feed my seeds, I have to keep it moving! I think about going back to school and getting my G.E.D.

I want to be a good father to my kids and want to raise them right, so they don't go down the same line I did. Yeah, I used to be a thug, selling dope on the corners, all day, non-stop, not go in the house except to eat and shhh — and that's how I lived.

I was out there doing it real big wit' them gold ones in my mouth. I was getting money. I wasn't worried about nothing but getting money. I was even getting greedy and I liked it. I was the one who woke up thinking about money, screaming "ef" the world! Getting money was my motivation. You feel me? Real talk!

-Young Quezyboe

From The Beat: Maybe that life works when you're solo-bolo and no one's depending on you, so when you get caught up and the money flow suddenly gets cut off, no one gets hurt but you — if you don't count the hurt and shame your momma is probably feeling — but with children to provide for, it's time to grow up and think long-term about money, about regular pay for a life time, 'cause kids are no short-term project. You feel? Real talk. Getting that GED is a start, but you've got to give legitimacy as much commitment as you gave that everyday thug life, more! It takes a man to keep that inner strength — boys and men who never grow up, stay too weak to shake the spot.

My Mohawk

People ask me,
Why do I get my hair braided in a Mohawk —
And I say, it's:

M — My
O — Own
H — Hair
A — And
W — Who Else Should
K — Kare

-Ri-Ri

From The Beat: Nice. Too bad you had to take it out. It is really important to express yourself, but it's also important how you present yourself, especially in the situation you are in. Be patient, your Mohawk will return! We know it.

I Just Might...

What's up Beat. This is Onio. I am in max holdin' it down with my folks but he just went to a group home...

I just might

On a late night flight

It's only right

My girls keep it tight

Me and my ninjas stay high as a kite

I keep my money in sight

-Onio

From The Beat: And we can tell from what you write/That you struggle between dark and light/You don't give up without a fight/But you too high to do it right/The system will take you down from spite/Unless you change your life with all your might.

Check Up

Q'vo! This that vato Lil' Mark from Hayward, California here up in this max unit. Yup, this is just to check-in on how I'm doin' — I'm cool, just marinatin', postin' up wit' the homeboys. I went to court on April twentieth, and I got time waived again. So I got court in about a month and a week on June first.

It's good though. Time flies by in here. I just read books and try not to focus on being on the outs. Oh yeah, my birthday is the thirty-first of May, and I'm'a be eighteen! So, the next day I got court and hopefully I'll get some good news! But I'm prepared for whatever. And to all, keep ya heads up! But I'm out, until pencil meets paper. Alrato!

-Lil' Mark

From The Beat: Since your name is Mark, we cut "D-Boy" the name you signed. Should we conclude that the "D" in D-Boy stands for drugs or dope, as in, sales? If so, while you won't be coming back here after your next release because you'll be eighteen, neither will you be free for long. Other signs that you're not ready to make the sacrifices required to become and remain a free man — depicting yourself here in max as "postin' wit' the homeboys" along with a phrase we cut: "holdin' it down." You're waiting for good news from the court, and we're waiting for good news from you.

I Want To See More Out My Window

Looking out my window I see a mountain with cows, and that is sad because I want to see more because this is not my life. I want to get out so bad, because I want to see my girl and her family and my friend at the group home too, because I can not take this anymore.

But I hope I get out soon, because my girl's birthday is July 24th, 1988 and mine is July 11, 1988.

-Lil' B

From The Beat: Happy Birthday to both of you, and we hope you get (and keep) the best birthday gift of all, which is freedom!

I See You In My Dreams

why you wanna break my heart

and leave me so lonely

i was born to love you

born to feel you in my heart

it's not no girl that can do better then you can do

i wanna hold you in my arms and kiss you all night

take you to the moon and then watch the sun light

tell you about this story that's an all-night keeper

lie you in the bed and take you deeper into my heart

i thank god for my family and i thank god for the truth

i thank god for me and i thank god for having you

it was somebody in my dreams

and i saw it was you standing right there

i'm ready to commit to you right now

tell me — is this the only way i can get you right back

and if so — then searching i'll go

then i can have you fo'sho'

then you'll be loving me

holding me, kissing me

so girl don't tell me what i'm feeling is make believe

this is my song and it's a story to you

i love you boo, i love you boo.

-Lil' Ant

From The Beat: Protestations of love can inflame a heart already ready to start into flame. Or, again, protestations of love blown onto the still hot embers of the waning flames of love, can make them burst forth again. But there are no guarantees in love, you know, neither in heaven above (Satan fell) or earth below — and unrequited love feels like hell. All may change tomorrow though, you never can tell.



What's Happening In Life

what's happening to me

would i rather be locked up

instead of being free

no that's not me

i just had to open my eyes up and see

but the real reason why

sometimes i leave

is because i be worried about my family

why is five-oh always messin' with oakland streets

is it because we call ourselves beasts

is it because we do people shady

yeah maybe

but some of us are crazy

running from lady to lady having babies

-Lil' Ant

From The Beat: That "yeah maybe" says a lot, and it's why if you want to stay free, you need to stay off the spot. Don't be one of the crazies out there doing folks shady then feeling like a boss if they don't get caught — 'cause sooner or later they will have to pay the bill with their freedom or their life. Now that you've opened your eyes to see, make the right choice(s) and stay free!

Money My Motivation

Money's motivation that's what I'm 'bout. I ain't tryin' a let the anger and vengeance get in my way — but it do!

My boy just got popped, but I'm still living. So wonder how I'm feeling? I'm dead in my heart and mind! I'm gon' die with my brah and go to hell with pride, 'cause I avenged my ninja. Money was the motivation.

-Young Guezyboe

From The Beat: We'd say the death of your friend, has addled your brain, which is part of grieving — as long as you don't act on how you're feeling, you can still be there for your children, which is what you wrote in your other piece this week is your deepest motivation. The game is what killed your friend, and the best revenge on the game is to liberate yourself from its power altogether — money and revenge are the two legs on which the game walks over the lives of thugs and their families. So walk out on the game before it walks over you and your family.

Letting This Tiempo Pass

G-vo, Beat? What's good? Well, before I start, let me introduce myself, this Giggles, from Newark, up in max, sendin' my utmost love and respect, honor, loyalty and embracement.

Well, what's up, Beat? I'm back again. How you been? Hope y'all doing coo'. As for this vato, just here chillin' like a villain. Just posting here. As you see, I'm still in these walls, letting tiempo pass me by, missing the old days and welcoming the new ones.

But to all you vatos out there — maintain yourselves and keep trucha on the placa, 'cause they ain't playing. They locking us up for everything! Just maintain and keep the heads up high. Well, this is just a lil' something for all you out there. Stay alert. Well, I'm gon' end this now. Alrato.

-Giggles

From The Beat: We can never tell which Giggles is about to show up in print, the old Giggles who would never even try to change the fact that he'd keep coming back to lock up by doing the same old every time he'd get released, or the Giggles who finally sees that he's been walking down a dead-end street and realizes he'd rather get somewhere in life — somewhere outside prison walls. It's really not even a matter of "keep trucha on the placa" — it's more like keep trucha on yourself, 'cause you're your own worst enemy out there!

My Motivation Coming To You

Been by my side
Stuck by me
Kept my head high
Put hope and joy in my heart
Kept my feet on the ground
Always kept a smile on my face
Baby always had faith
Now I'm down baby still strong for us,
So I'm gone for a while
You a real lady
Know I'm coming home
To you

-Lil' Kev Mien

From The Beat: This girl that sticks with you sees something inside you worth holding onto. What is that thing? If you had to ask yourself what you value most in the world, who you are deep deep deep down, what would it be?

RIP Cell

Man why you fools had to kill my Cell!? I didn't even get to go to the funeral. When I get out I'm a go stupid fo Cell, don't trip, I love you and please watch over me bra.

-Ko

From The Beat: We are sorry about the loss of your friend, Cell. Cell's loss should be your push to make the change for a better life. Going stupid in his memory is further destroying yourself, others and the community you live in. The time is now to wake up, in Cell's memory.

i want to
get good news
so i can get out
and stop talking to
these fake dudes

RIP Paco

Dear Paco, man I feel sad for those fools who killed you bro. I will never forget about you bro.

-Lil' Ronnie

From The Beat: The smart thing to do is to take your life in a whole other direction, if you do not, well, we will see you back in the hall or worse. Wake up young child and see the light!

Home

What exactly do I miss about home? I wish I was at home with my mom cause I just want to go home.

-Son

From The Beat: Don't we all want to go home, especially you youngstas locked away.

Today

What's up Beat? Well, I just wanna tell all y'all out there 'bout my day. Well, I went to court today, and they just said to come back on June twenty-eighth, two weeks after my birthday!

They said they're gonna see how I'm doin' and everything. Right now, I've been doing a good program, so far — but if I mess up, they'll probably charge me as an adult! That means that I gotta keep doing what I've been doin' so far. Till next time, much love. I'm gone.

-Big Vic

From The Beat: We respect the good program you're doing, and it can only help you with the judge. Even more than impressing the judge though, we're proud of you for reexamining your life and what you want to do with it — 'cause after the judgment and after time served, there's still you and what you do with that freedom you do dearly desire to regain. It's an "inside" job!

Motivation

what keeps me
going is
my family and my
friends keep me going
but my family
keeps me going
the most

-Tay

From The Beat: Two parts: (1) motivation to keep going, and (2) motivation to go in the right direction — yeah, family's best, but, in the end, it's got to be you facing and passing the test.

Getting High-Yi-Yi!

you look up in the sky-yi-yi-yi
you might see us floating by-yi-yi
and all i know
is smoking weed and smoking indo
if you know a lil' mo'
smoking weed might make you go
broke
and popping them pills
makes you feel good
and you got thizz feel
and they might see
greeting yo' grill
i'm just telling you how i feel

-Young Slick

From The Beat: How many months have you been on max? And all you want to do is go back to what you were doing to get yourself here? It's true that learning something new, learning how to live as an adult without weed and thizz to mask your emotions, is a difficult notion to embrace — but it will prove to be easier than what the other road takes out of you before you're through. Do you really want chains on your feet and your brain?

Real Talk

mean-muggin'
straight thuggin'
they tryin' a be something they wasn't
people in jail tryin' a get bail
ninjas tryin' a succeed but commence to fail
livin' in hell, thinking it's a spell
sittin' in a cell tryin' a find out what's that
nasty smell
four walls in a cold room
people keep doggin' lookin' for doom
hopin' and prayin' we get out soon
man they got us trapped in a cage
goin' through a maze
and people haven't seen the sun in day
like a cocoon, same county food
same staff bein' hellu rude
waiting to go before the judge
dee-ay is hatin' so i'm holdin a grudge
i want to get good news
so i can get out and stop talking to these fake
dudes
livin' in a city that shows no pity
where people sell drugs to get that chedda
while we're in here waiting for that dear-john
letta
prayin' to god so i can be a better man
and stay out of trouble and give an extra hand
for the people sinkin' in quick sand

-H-Fella

From The Beat: Forget about the DA! The best way to beat what any district attorney has to say, is to do exactly what you say — change your ways and the DA won't get paid to trash-talk you or what you do. Just be that better man, make that the basis of your each and every plan, and it's guaranteed you'll be there to lend that extra hand to your fellow man in his time of need, not to mention the women and children who need to see their men get free from the system and

This Love

do you love me to where
you cry and can't sleep at night
'cause you thinking 'bout me
have i stolen your heart
can i be the drug you crave
do you ever dream about me
you say you love me — prove it
call or write me and say what's on your mind
baby i have nothing but time
but not enough to keep writing more of these
lines
so bye-bye baby
oh yeah — i love you too
this yo' man t-l-baby

-Tl Baby

From The Beat: We forgot how you could rhyme like this. But we have a question to ask real quick — even if she loves you true, don't you need to get out a life so twisted you keep coming back to lock up as if you'd missed it!



Program And Mode

Every day we on thizz structure type shhh
I wanna go home; I'm tired of thizz bullshhh
Wanna kick it on the block, sell a few rocks
Look where it got me in thizz Walden spot
I'm feelin' kinda froggish
So I might jus' leap
Get off on any chick that's a so called beast
I'm in da struggle, Mayne
I'm tryna get it quick
Go home and get out this structure type shhh
As I'm staring at dese four walls, Mayne
I shouldn't been smokin' on dem good good grapes
But now I'm locked up again
Where is my kin
Maybe gettin' high or off a bottle of Hen
Yeah, it's this mode chick
Yeah, I'm homebound
If you chicks wanna hate
Den me and my chicks gon clown
'Cause I'ma keep it solid to the end
Yeah, I'm in da hall but I still got my ken
Every day's a struggle, Mayne
I'm tyna get this money, Mayne
Yeah, my cousin Ree he a legend
Layin' ninjas on they back
My tribe run deep ready to defeat
Any ninja that's a so-called
Smoke every day
Smoke at night
Smoke this blunt
I love this life
Push this weight
Make this dough
Man, I really love to smoke
Slap that ninja
Push dat pro
Damn! I'm makin' hella dough
Hittin' licks
Robbin' folks
Jus' to have a bag to smoke
Get dat money, get it quick
Yeah, I'm hittin' hella licks
I be gettin' all yo' money
Can't no chick get it like me
You see me work for my chips
And you quick to get dismissed
Hurt a chick wit' my rhymes
'Cause I'm rappin' all the time
My reputation ain't sporadically
I get this money rapidly

-Lil' Zillah

From The Beat: Okay, Lil' Zillah, let's lay out a few Beat ground rules (that we think you already know, but don't respect). We don't let you talk about your set or where you're from if you use that to tell us why your city is better than some other city. We see no benefit in allowing you to rep your town, when we know that if you lived in some other town you'd be reppin' that town just as passionately — and just as meaninglessly. It's not about where you're from, it's about who you are. And what we get about who you are in this poem doesn't give us much confidence that you have learned anything that will move your life forward. In fact, it seems to us that you are stuck in denial. You aren't getting all our money, like you boast. All you're doing is costing money, not earning it. All you're making is a history of repeated trips to lock-up, handing your God-given freedom over to strangers to tell you what to do and where to do it. If you really want to make a reputation for yourself, try doing something different with your life — like doing it legit. Otherwise, you'll just be another imprisoned youngster bragging about her street accomplishments, and you'll be the only one who's impressed!

Grown Up Since Childhood

So I've been known it was all on me since a while ago. I've been the grown up in my family since I was little. I was doing drugs and making my own decisions like if I wanted to spend my daddy's rent money on dope. I miss so much about home. Everything — my bedroom, my car, my music, my phone and most of all my family. They do so much for me, how could I not?

-Merrily

From The Beat: Well, even though you had grown up responsibilities, you still need to learn some grown-up limitations on what you can do. We think you've learned those while you've been here, so that you will be able to give back some of what your family has done for you.

Surgery

The death of a family member is the worst death that could happen. But see, try having one death happen in the same room you grandma just died in two days ago. What do you do? I just let it go, but now I think what was that? Did it happen on purpose or by accident? See I thought it happen on purpose, so now I have the biggest fear of going in to a hospital and now I have to face that fear and go and get surgery. I don't know what to do, but all I do know, I'm going to have to get it done. But I'm scared.

-B-Eyes

From The Beat: We can understand why going to the hospital to get surgery would be scary. In fact, you may like it. You won't feel your greatest for a minute, but people will come when you call them, they will bring you ice cream if you want it, and you can watch whatever you want on TV. Let us know how it all went afterwards, and whether you're still scared or not.

Looking Out My Window

When I look out the window here at PSK, I notice a toilet with grass growing out of it. I remember when I first got here I was crashing, so the manager put me in room nine to sober up. While sobering up, that toilet was the only thing I look at, at night when I wake up and at quiet time. Looking out the other window there is a woman outside who talks to herself. At first I thought she was acting. Then she was out that same night in the rain doing the same shhh! She is very interesting and keeps me entertained.

One time I was looking out the window in my room and this girl was on a chair stripping in front of three guys. When she finished, the guys brought out a piece and were tokin'. It was hella funny though because she was just making a fool of herself because she looked hella old and she was acting as if she was to turn the guys off.

-Kalfornia

From The Beat: You are seeing some interesting things outside that window of yours. We can't tell if it's because you're just more observant than most, or because you have a more interesting window to look out of. What do you think the story with that woman who talks to herself is? We have nothing to add about the stripper...

Looking Out My Window

When I look out my window I see people shooting up the drug dealer, the little girl that's probably barely into her teens getting picked up by a guy that is 20. I sit back wishing that all this stuff would clear up and all I see would be a dog being walked by my dad, and my mom driving up in a car.

But reality check — that ain't how my life is. Growing up in alleys, you don't get the white picket fence house. You know my life may be the same as a lot of others. I just appreciate the window I have.

-B-Eye

From The Beat: We're not sure what you mean when you say you appreciate the window you have. Is that the same window which you see these shady things going on? What do you appreciate about that? We hope you'll "graduate" to a window where you can see the things you want to see, and not the things you've been forced to see.

Lalo

To me, Lalo is always and forever
Never will I forget the good days
That we used to have
Looking in your brown eyes, feelin' good
It was almost like we were gonna be together forever.

But why, why did I have to go off
and do some shhh...

I thought I was doin' the right thing
But I found out about five months ago
that I was doin' the wrong thing

But to me Lalo is still always and forever.

-China

From The Beat: Well, we can't tell from this what you learned five months ago, or what you were doing that was wrong, but the one thing we can tell from this — and the one thing we hope you've learned — is that everything we do has consequences.

Responsible For Myself

I feel responsible for myself every day. I grew up taking care of my mom, and neither of my parents set any limits for me, so I grew up to be in my teens and I started to pull away from my own responsibilities. Then I started to get into troubles with drugs and the law.

When I was almost 16 years old, I moved with my parents to another county. I started to get really depressed. It got so bad I never left my house and started cutting myself. I hit rock bottom and begged my dad for help. Then I went into a mental hospital for 12 days.

Then my parents decided to do something and kick me out unless I go to this program for depression. So now I'm getting my stuff together so when I turn 18 in two months, I can be responsible for myself again, and live life the right way.

-Brittany

From The Beat: Are you getting the help you think you need, Brittany? Which country did your parents move you to? Are your parents happy that you are in this program? What are your plans for when you leave here?

Keepin' It Real

Keepin' it real means be honest, tell the truth. Don't front, even though a lot of people do, Just Keep it real.

-Hyphy

From The Beat: Do you always follow this advice, Hyphy, or are there times when you front?

I Miss My Room

Well what I miss about home is my room. I miss just chillin' in my room, choppin' it up on the phone, laying around, whatever. I just miss the fact that it's mine, somewhat like my sanctuary! But yeah it's all mine.

-Hyphy

From The Beat: Yes, there is something very comforting about being in your own room, filled with the things that make you who you are. We hope you treasure your sanctuary when you get back to it so you won't have to leave it again, unless you want to.

Keepin' It Real

My definition of "keeping it real" is being true. Not only being true to yourself but being true to others. Keeping it real is when you're not being fake. It's when you're actually being real.

-China

From The Beat: Does this mean always telling the truth — or just always knowing the truth, whether you tell it or not?

Looking Out My Window!

When I look out my window, I feel the wind blow on my face, and I just stand there and reminisce about being home, having freedom, doing what I want to do and kickin' it on the block wit' my homeboys. I hella miss everything, and I just wake up out of my day dream and finally realize that I am in here in Walden House from doing what I was doing when I was out there. And I am just thankful that I am here, so I can get my life together. And be out there and not mess up like last time.

-Makineti

From The Beat: If you're grateful for being here, that tells us that you are thoughtful and mature, and that you should get a lot out of this program. We hope you learn the things you need to learn (like what your triggers are, what situations you need to avoid, what coping strategies you need to develop) so that when you get out of here, you'll never have to come back here or to any place like it.

Life Out Of A Window

Hoppin' on the bus
Sittin' in the back of the Fifteen
Life out of a window
I see nothin' but dope fiends
Pickin' up some crumbs
They smelled searchin' on the street
You might make it out the 'hood
Or your bein' called an auntie
If you think you're doin' it big
You better step up your game
Quit livin' in your dreams
And step up to the plate,
If you don't,
You might not be able to leave the streets
You might stay alive a crack head
Or just dead under the concrete
If you wanna live this life
Go ahead and sell the cream
But I been through that situation
And I've been down the path
If you wanna live the life as a ballah
You got to have your own plan

-Young Beast B4

From The Beat: Very descriptive Young Beast. It definitely speaks out the things you have seen and been through, which explains why you don't want to travel back down the same path again. Do you have a plan? If so, what's the first step? If not, why not?

Back In Juvenile

The reason why I'm back in this hell hole is because I got kicked out of my group home and the kid I had a fight with didn't get kicked out — ain't that some shhh.

Now I got a court date comin' up to see if I could go home and go to a day treatment program, and I am trying real hard to do what I got to do. When I get out of this place, I will try in my mind to never come back, and when I achieve that it will be all right and I will get back in school and work on all of my problems and achieve those goals.

-Hajji B4

From The Beat: Well, hopefully everything works out for you. We'd hate to see you in and out of the halls like so many of the youngsters we know. Why is it easier to wanna do right while you're incarcerated, but not so easy when you're out?

What I miss

I miss my mom and my ninjas. I miss doing what I do when I do it. I miss not going to school, and smoking hella weed, going downtown, talk to hella girls.

-Fat Rat B2

From The Beat: The things you seem to miss the most — not going to school, smoking weed — are the things that will lead you back here, and more missing...

What Exactly Do You Miss About Home

I really miss my family. I don't like sleeping in this hard bed. I miss my bed. I miss my food that I eat. This food in the halls is hella nasty. Some doesn't taste right. I hate it here. I wish I was at home where things are right. I don't have to worry about nothing. I know some of my family miss me. My dad, my auntie, they want me to come home. I wanna come home too. I also love talking on the phone with my ex-lady that broke up with me.

TV really is what I need to kick back and chill. I like staying up late at night and waking up at 12:00 in the afternoon eating 2-3 bowls of cereal. I wish I was at home.

-Billy B4

From The Beat: We would also miss all of the things you mentioned. What do you like to watch on TV to chill? What kind of cereal do you like? What's the nastiest food they serve in the hall?

Missing My Grandparents

What I miss about home is my grand parents and family, my pit bull and my iguanas; also the young homies. I miss going from house to house gettin' my feet wet on a late night hype from my girl friend's house. And my favorite thing I miss doing me on the out scrapin' and gettin' paid.

-Art Cash B4

From The Beat: Wow, you have an iguana — that's tight. (But we're glad you listed it after your family...) How do your grandparents feel about you being in juvenile hall? Have they talked to you about it?

The Other Side Of The Fence

Lookin' out my window I see a fence, and on the other side of that fence I see trees. I stand and think of all the places and things I could be doing.

-Mighty Mouse B4

From The Beat: This is a good beginning to potentially a great piece. But it begs for more. What things could you be doing on the other side of the fence? Take us there...

Looking Out My Window

When I look out my YGC window, I think about the good time I had and I just think about freedom, and wish one day they would let me free from this place, hopin' that I don't come back.

-Patrick B1

From The Beat: Have you decided to give up the things that bring you to juvie, Patrick, or are you just "hopin'" you won't come back? Has "hopin'" worked in the past to keep you free? Who decides whether you ever come back or not? Isn't the answer on you?

Looking Out My Window

When I look out my window I see stars when I'm in the halls. When I am at home I see the same shhh every day. But when I get out the halls I'm moving to a new environment so I can have a fresh start.

-Art Cash B4

From The Beat: A fresh start and a fresh view from your window. It's good to move to a new environment sometimes, but just remember that 'you' bring 'you' wherever you go. So if you ain't right with yourself, it probably won't matter where you stay.

Out My Window

Looking out my window at the spot, I see different colors and I see my ninjas and I see the block and I see money and crack heads. In the halls you can see nothing but B3 and B5 and a visitor's bench and a hallway.

-Jordan B4

From The Beat: Are you tired of seeing the same things every day? We would be? How do you occupy your time so you aren't so bored? Do you think about the changes you will make on the outs so you can stay on the outs? Like what?

Time Goes By

When you waiting for time, it seems like it does not want to go by. If you really think about it, time is very important. You have to know what time is so you go to work. You have to know what time it is to keep up with the rest of the world. It a time and a place for everything you do and say — time is everything.

-Smacks B4

From The Beat: You're right... time is a valuable resource like money. And like money, we have to use it wisely. So how can you spend your time in a way that benefits you in the long run?

What Cito Miss

What Cito miss about home is my freedom. I miss my sister, my bro, my 'Potes (Newports), and my clothes. Cito also miss my boy Lineezy with the beezies. I also miss my sword, my bat, and my shank. Mainly, I miss my grapes.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: It's interesting how the people and things you listed in the beginning are hurt by the things you listed at the end of your piece. Have you ever tripped on this? And why does Cito write about himself in the third person? (Why not write in the first person: "I miss ..."?)

To Do What I do

What I miss about home is jus bein' free. Bein' wit ma family and friends. Eatin' grandma cookin'. Being with da females. And you know jus' bein' free to do what I do.

-Jeff B2

From The Beat: If doing what you do is the thing that got you where you are right now, then not doin what you do wouldn't be such a bad thing, would it? By the way, what does your grandma cook?

What I Miss

W'at I miss about home is my own room, own TV, own bed, radio, clothes, mom's cooking, my money, my cousins. Where I'm from, we don't call each other "friends," we call each other "cousins."

-Money Earnin' Vernon B1

From The Beat: Is being here in the hall like old home week for you — surrounded by cousins? All we can say, MEV, is that if you miss the things you say you miss enough, you won't do the things that take you away from all that...

Freedom

I miss being able to leave and enter my house when I am able to. I miss my loved ones, family, and friends. I miss being able to eat, sleep, talk, and use the bathroom when I feel like it. I miss eatin' the food I want to eat and when I want to eat. I miss talking on the computer and on the phone. I miss going to the gym and playing video games. I miss going to my cousin's houses. I miss kickin' it with my friends. I miss chillin' with girls. I miss my usual schedule.

-Aubrey B2

From The Beat: When it all comes down to it, all these things you miss are things that come with freedom. You miss your freedom and who wouldn't? So what are you going to do when you get out that's different from past behavior? How are you going to cherish your freedom?

Looking Through My Cell Windows

When I look through my cell window, I see a barbed wire fence. I see a hill, with grass, a light pole. Sometimes I see cars passing by. I see a concrete floor. I see the next unit. I see freedom out the window. I see my life out that window. But instead I'm wasting my life doing the same shhh I was before and wasting my life in jail.

-Enano B4

From The Beat: Are you ready to stop wasting your life? There's not much of our lives to waste (life is so short), so when we do things that aren't beneficial it really is unfortunate. If you see freedom out that window, what steps can you — and are you willing — to take to grab hold of it and never give it up again?

Wishing To Look Out My Own Window

I miss looking out my window an' seeing all the cars pass by. Looking out my window, I seen a lot of things. Looking out my window, I wish I could. I been praying for the last eighty-something days. I just pray I get out an' stay out, an' never come back at all.

Looking back will make you come back. I just can't wait 'til I get out of this. I miss looking out my window an' seeing my mom walking from the store.

-Man Man B1

From The Beat: Yes, Man Man, it must be very hard to look out a window when you can't walk out of the room it's in! We understand why you're praying to stay out and never come back, but praying alone won't do it. God has His own prayers for you, too. Are you listening to Him? Are you answering His prayers? Why do you say that looking back brings you back to the hall? We agree that looking forward is the direction you want to go, but sometimes looking back can help you avoid some of your past mistakes. That's called learning from experience.

How I Got My Name

I'm not trying to sound hard by telling you this, and I want you to know this, Man. When I was young I used to be out all night doing shhh that a 12-year-old should not have been going. Even when my mom said that I couldn't go outside, I still went outside.

Then one day I seen my big bro (Dead Man) in his new car and asked him how did he get money for that? He said, "Sellin' rocks." That same day I got put on and made \$230 that same night. So from then on, I stayed fitted and had a ice-out grill and a Honda on 18". I was making cash by boomin' rocks. So ninjas started calling me Ques Boom.

When all the money, cars, fits, and ice-out grills came, so did the flaffs (girls). When I started havin' sex, it was lovely. I was on flaffs left and right. What I would do is try to meet five girls every day and out of five I would get with three of them. Then make them a part of the team. So people put Banga after the Boom on my name because I be bangin' out.

Then one day I met this girl and I fell in love with her. After we started having sex with each other, I changed all my ways. And then one day I went to the halls and got sent to a group home. Her number that I had was off, so I didn't talk to her for about half a year. Then when I came back to the halls, I called my brother and he said I got that fo' you. Then, I wrote her and now I'm waiting for her to write back. That's how I got my name and what made me change from the fast life to the life I live now. But the name Ques Boom Banga still stayed with me.

-qgb B2

From The Beat: This is a very interesting piece, Ques. It sounds like your life as a drug seller led both to good and to bad. The bad is what you're now experiencing. The good is what you're waiting back to hear from. We hope this girl writes you back, because anyone who could have that effect on you must be worth having in your life. What have you changed about yourself since you met this girl, QGB? You said you are no long living the fast life, so how different is the life style you are living now from the one you were living before?

Coming Back

W'at it do wit' dat Beat Within, hope good... Well yeah, I'm back in this hall and I wish I was out... The reason why I'm back in here was because I ran from a group home like a dumb ass.

The reason I ran was because the school I was at was saying I was not doing good, but at the same time the school was calling the group home up saying I'm doing this an' that but I was not doing shhh. So the group home told me, "If they keep calling, you goin' back to YGC!" So that's why...

I hate all this shhhh. Can I get out? No, 'cause I have court on May 5th 2006.

Well that's all I got to say for now. Just want to say w'a's up to my bro... Keep your head up. Oh yeah, when I was at school, I was trying to go to school every day doing my school work, bein' good, but hey, that's how some schools are, you know.

-Jessica GU

From The Beat: It's ironic that you ran from the group home to avoid YGC, and that's exactly where you ran to... It sounds like that school was giving you a hard time, but don't give up on school, Jessica. An education is truly the key to a better future, so sticking it out is worth it. Why do you suppose the school was saying those things about you if you were doing everything you were supposed to be doing?

I Miss...

I miss about home is my family, and my little brothers and my girl friend and my mom and my niece and my sister and all the good food.

-Fat Thug B5

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a lot of great people to miss. How will you show these people you love them when you get out?

Don't Want My Mom To Visit

The thing I exactly miss about being home is being free and being able to do what I want, like eat, sleep, talk, and whatever else I like doing. Being away from home is not the problem, but being locked up is, because when you have to listen to some man or woman that's not your parents, it just make ya mad.

I can't speak for everyone, but I know when the staff take me away from my mother after a visit, I feel like takin' off on somebody, an' let them feel my pain, because I love my mother so much. It's to the point, when I come to the halls, I don't even want her to come up here every day just to see how her young man been holdin' the unit down.

But I'm cool right now at the moment, 'cause when I get back out, I'm still go be the king, ya heard? I'm out.

-Lil' Ant B1

From The Beat: It's clear that you understand the pain your mother suffers every time she has to come to this jail to visit her son. Of course, going off on staff, no matter how angry they make you, would only make your situation worse, and increase your mother's pain, so that's not really an option. As we see it, the only real option is to find a way to stay out of here altogether. If you go back out on the streets determined to "be the king" (how many kings can there be out there?), then it's very likely you won't be thinking of your mother and her pain, but of yourself and your pleasure. Sometimes, love requires some sacrifices on our part. Is there anything you're willing to sacrifice on the outs in order to stay on the outs, and give your mother what she has sacrificed so much for — namely, you?

Looking Out My Window

When I look out my window, all I see is the same-ass clear people walkin' by, same-ass cars and it ain't never change.

I miss my own bed, I miss my little brothers and sisters, some good-ass food, my mom and dad, my Newports, weed, homies — basically freedom.

-Jay B2

From The Beat: We removed your bullet piece because it was a straight threat. For all our topics, we prefer if you just concentrate on one, not all three, so you can write some details about it. For example, you say you miss "some good-ass food," but what is that to you? We could have learned a lot more if you had taken just one topic. Next time...

Everybody Want They Freedom

I miss home a lot. I miss my Play Station, TV, my snacks, my couch, leaving when I want to. Man, I miss a lot of stuff.

The number one thing I miss is my freedom — that's the key word — "freedom." Everybody here want they freedom, an' I want to get out because it's not cool being in YGC. Everybody here need to get out an' don't come back.

-Papa B1

From The Beat: You're right, Papa. So if all of this is true, how do you explain your choices (and the choices of most everyone in the hall) to do the things that lead to the loss of that key word, freedom? Why is it so easy, when you're on the outs, to forget how precious your freedom is? We think you should tape this piece to your bedroom mirror at home so that the next time you're out, you can constantly remind yourself that nothings worth going back to juvy.

Why They Gotta Do Me Like That

Why they gotta do me like that? Why they gotta shoot me up 'cause they hatas?

Got hit by all kinds of weapons
Hurt so much can't even shed tears

But I'm still here

Doin' time wit' seven holes

My release date? I don't even know

Tryin' to play me with three strikes

'Cause of my street life

Lower District

For the Upper is restricted

So best keep yo' distance

-Goofy B5

From The Beat: We don't need to know the actual neighborhood you're from — but what you tell us in this piece is that you are still bound to a street and not to your own identity. What we find difficult to understand — especially for someone with your intelligence — is how you want to blame "them" for playing you, but not yourself for giving them that opportunity. Of course, we could never approve them shooting you, and we don't. But damn, you've been shot more than once. Doesn't that make you wanna reconsider how you're living?

I Messed Up

Damn! I really messed up. I was on the run for a year, and now I'm in here doing my time in the halls. I should have known my time would have come. So now I'm just waiting for my PO to talk to me.

-Destiny GU

From The Beat: Since you "should have known" you'd pay the price for running, why did you? Does your experience make you want to do anything different when you get out this time? Now that you are in here with plenty of time to think, what do you want your next steps to look like? More of the same, or a new path, a new life?

Been Through So Much

I been through bullshhh all my life, I burnt my bridges, bit the hand who fed me, and screwed people over.... But where I came from, an' how I was raised, females were made to get money any way possible....

I went through that boost hustle, that 'ho'e hustle, that robbery drug game.... My life as a bullet touches real guns for my real nillas, who suspects that a sweet lil' Filipino girl carrying a gun with extended clip in her Care Bear backpack?

I been playing the game to win and so far I hit jail, collected \$200 and passed go... OGs tell me it's a matter of time I get too caught up and end up pregnant, banged up and doped out. At this point, I'm 'bout ready to prove the system wrong and do so good I will make everybody shhh bricks! So write anothe hit me later...

-The Crackhead GU

From The Beat: Sounds like your OGs are giving you a solid warning about what could happen to your future. If anyone knows about what could happen, it's them. So are you going to listen to the experts? How do you plant to prove the system wrong and live a better life? What do you plan to sacrifice in order to avoid coming back here?

What I Miss About Home

Wuz up homeboys? This is that homie Slow Pain. So, one thing I miss from home is my family: my mom, my sister, everything you know. I also miss my radio, my TV and stuff.

I miss my homeboys too and the people who love me like my jaina Mitzy. Every night I think of her and I remember the good memories you know. I love her, I really do. I love you mijá, and my heart suffers and cries is 'cause you my ja. I love you. Alrato.

-Slow Pain B5

From The Beat: Slow or fast, we feel the pain in your words. It must be hard for you to be away from things you miss so much. How do you deal with the pain of being away from loved ones? Hopefully, the fact that you're missing stuff now will be enough for you to want to get out and stay out. Will it?

Not Going To Change

As I was coming up in this earth, the government labeled a failure since birth. Anyway, damn, I haven't proved them wrong. Messing up, taking hit after hit of that bong.

I'm slowly realizing that as time goes on but I don't think I'ma change what I do because this is the life that I've been trying to choose. And now that I've chose it

I don't think I'm eva gonna leave it.

-Pinguino B2

From The Beat: We hope you know that when you say "this is the life that I've been trying to choose," it includes allowing yourself to become a slave of the system, like now. This is the consequence for your choices, so you can say that this is your choice too. We hope you don't choose to come here again, but that decision is in your hands.

The Story Of My Son

I just found out my son freaked some girl, on the floor wit' his sister in the same room without her knowing. I can't look at my son in his eyes anymore. I can't wait til he gets back from his group home so I can slap the shhhh out of him for touching her. That's the story of my son.

-Lil' Nicoya GU

From The Beat: This is a disturbing story, but many of the details are still a mystery. How old is your son? How old is your daughter? Are they really your children? (How serious was this incident? Was it an assault, as you make it sound like, or was it more like kids "playing doctor?") How old were you when you had them? Don't you think the "slap the shhhh out of him" response is one most adults rely on, and the one that never works to change behavior? How many young men (and women) do you know got slapped around or beaten, but it didn't do anything to stop them from acting out? Can you imagine any other approach you might take with your son that would have the effect you want it to have? What will you say to him? What do you want to teach him?

Missin' Home

I miss takin' a shower by myself, and I hope that y'all know what I'm talking about because you be in the shower with at least five ninjas. I need to take one by myself and wear boxers instead of somebody else underwear.

I would like to see my little nephew and my little bra bra and my punk-rock sis, but I'm stuck in this nasty ol' place. But it is what it is, so watch what you do.

I miss talking on the phone all night and eatin' Puerto Rican food and watchin' my own TV playin' PS2 until however late I want to. But anyways I'll see y'all next week.

-Young Fabe B5

From The Beat: Yeah, we would also hate to shower with hella people. It's nice to have a little privacy when you're showering. When you think about the things you're missing, do you also think about how to stay out there with these things so you won't have to miss them any more? By the way, can you give us some examples of Puerto Rican food?

Missing Home

What I miss about home is me lying on bed and my girl being there. My cigarettes, my food, and also TV.

I can't forget about my bed. I want to drink badly. I want to smoke heavy, maybe even popping a pill. I want a few blunts, 40 ounces of 211 an' get tipsy. That's what I miss.

-Edwin B2

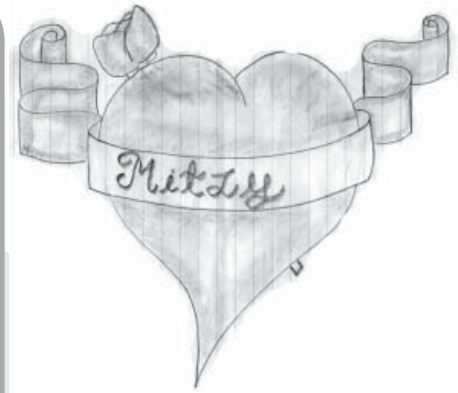
From The Beat: You know Edwin, anyone reading the things you're missing can predict how quickly you will be returning to lock-up when you get out of here — returning to write more about the things you miss! Of course, we had to take out one of those things (you'll know which one), but experience tells us that when a young man or woman can think of nothing else but drink and smoke, then they'll quickly go back to that, and just as quickly come back to this. So, in addition to those pills, weed and drink you love, we hope you also learn to love being here or places like here, because that's what you're going to be experiencing.

What Exactly Do You Miss About Home?

I miss a lot of things about being at home. The things that I miss about being at home are seeing my family and making sure they're all right. What I miss the most is smoking a blunt.

-Uptown princess GU

From The Beat: We hope you'll be able to keep disciplined about not smoking when you get out, because it would be a shame to see you get locked up again because of a dirty pee test on a probation violation. We've seen it happen too many times to believe you can do it and get away with it. Plus, why not use the time you've been marijuana-free to build on and see how long you can go without smoking that blunt.



Mitzy

What is it that I am left wit'
That after you left you left
A to Z of memories, BaBa
Two or three photographs
This is how it is like

To live your life in a strong storm
My heart suffers, Girl Baby

-Slow Pain B5
From The Beat: This is both sweet and sad. We hope you get out of here soon, and that you're able to reclaim your love.

Roses Are Red

Roses are red, violets are blue
I'm in purple, khaki, flip flops too.
I'm eating this food that tastes boo boo
The staff look like boo boo too.

-Yessenia GU

From The Beat: Purple and khaki, that ain't your style. Why not think about your life for a while. If this place makes you as sick as you say, then you'd better find a new way to play. Next time you're out and breathing free air, when temptations arrive, we hope you'll beware!

I feel like I got to move on an' live life without you, but every time someone talks about you I get down inside

What's The Real Deal?

Everywhere I go someone has something to say. I really don't care how people feel. To me "only God can judge me" and that's real. I ask myself all the time what's the real deal? But it's still not that clear. People give me advice but its like I can't hear. It's like it goes in one ear out the other!

I'm just keeping it real!

-Berlin GU

From The Beat: Why do you think you can't hear people's advice? Do you listen to your own advice? Do you believe you already know everything you need to know in the world, or are there things you could still learn? If the answer is yes, then why don't you care how people feel? They may be able to expand your knowledge base, and the need to learn more never ends throughout our lives. God may be the only One who can judge you in the final act, but in this world, the courts can also judge you and take your freedom, and that is where we think you need to focus some attention.

Tables Have Turned

I love you for your ways, but your ways hurt me bad, all the shhhh you've done and I was still by your side. I really thought you had my back this time around I still stuck wit you. I thought we had something special? You loved running the streets and I respected your wishes.

I feel like I got to move on an' live life without you, but every time someone talks about you I get down inside. I used to want to always be by your side. I remember when we said we'll be there for each other.

Tables have turned and you be on some other. It's cool. I realized love is blind! I still don't understand why you always lied. You know I guess it's true what they say, a lying man is a half man and a half man is a no man. But it ain't nothing to me. I was just too blind to see.

-Berlin GU

From The Beat: You say that it's cool, but obviously this guy's lies hurt you. This doesn't make you weak though, it only makes you human. What does make you weak, however, is allowing yourself to be "processed" through the criminal justice system. You can't control the actions of anyone else, including any man in your life, but you can control your own actions, and it is your own actions which lead you here.

Lo Que Extraño

Lo que más extraño es a mis seres queridos, a mi radio y me teléfono. Pero extraño más a mi familia y salir con mi novia a comer, al cine, a donde sea.

From The Beat: Si eso es lo que tanto extrañas, has hecho algo para obtenerlo otra vez? ¿Lo has pensado? ¿Esta hacer lo bueno en tus metas para el futuro? Si no, deberían.

What I Miss

What I miss the most are my loved ones, my radio, and my phone, but I miss my family more and going out with my girlfriend to eat, the movies, or wherever.

From The Beat: If that is what you miss the most, have you tried to do something to obtain these things once again? Have you thought about it? Is doing what's good in your goals for the future? If they're not, they should be.

Lo Que Más Extraño

Lo que yo extraño de mi hogar son las calles de donde andaba en bicicleta, mis amigos, mi novia. Pero lo que más extraño son a mis homies y las calles donde me la pasaba cotorriando y también extraño a mi familia, a mi jefa y a todos mis carnales. Extraño como cotorriaba con toda mi raza.

From The Beat: ¿Por que extrañas más las calles y tus amigos que otras cosas? ¿Que bueno te han dado las calles? ¿Sabias que estar aquí se lo debes alguna de las dos cosas, homies o calle? ¿Estaria dispuesto a perder todo lo que tienes por una tontera de calle? Piensa en lo mejor para ti amigo, y usa tu cabeza.

What I Miss The Most

What I miss from my place are the streets where I used to ride my bike, my friends, and my girlfriend. But what I miss the most are my homies and the streets where I used to spend my time kicking it. I also miss my family, my mother, and all my bros. I miss how I used to kick it with my entire race.

From The Beat: Why do you miss the streets and your friends more than other things? What good thing have the streets given you? Did you know that you owe being in here to two of the things you mentioned: The homies or the streets? Would you be willing to lose everything that you have for something stupid as the streets? Think about what's best for you friend, and use your head.

I also miss my television because I used to watch television in Spanish and now I only watch television in English because almost everyone in here speaks English.

Extraño a Mi Familia

Yo extraño todo de mi casa especial a mis seres queridos, a mi madre a quien quiero mucho. Extraño mucho a mi hermano, a mi hermanita y a una novia que tenía.

From The Beat: Estamos seguros que ellos también te extrañan. ¿Estas haciendo algo por estar con ellos? ¿Has podido valorar lo más importante de la vida despues de esta experiencia?

I Miss My Family

I miss everything from my house, especially my loved ones like my mother whom I love very much. I miss my brother, my little sister, and the girlfriend I had very much.

From The Beat: We're positive that they miss you, too. Are you doing something so you can be with them? Have you been able to value the most important thing

Lo Que Yo Exacamente Extraño

Lo que yo exactamente extraño de mi hogar son las cosas de mi hogar, como mis seres queridos. Por ejemplo: Mis tías, mis tíos, mis amigos, mis hermanos, mi padre, y mi madre. Lo que yo extraño es a toda mi familia. Los extraño principalmente ahora que estoy preso y no puedo estar cerca de mi familia.

Yo tambien extraño mi cama porque no es lo mismo dormir en estos colchones como dormir en nuestra cama.

También extraño dormir hasta bien tarde porque yo me acostumbre a dormir tarde en mi casa. Yo tambien extraño mi television porque yo antes miraba television en Español y ahora solo Inglés porque casi todos hablan Inglés aquí.

From The Beat: Todos extrañamos a nuestros seres querido cuando no los tenemos. ¿Los extrañabas cuando estabas afuera? Nosotros somos egoista. Cuando tenemos las cosas no nos importan hasta cuando las vemos perdidas. Esperamos que esta experiencia te ayude a recapacitar y dale más importancia a las cosas que merecen dedicación. ¿Crees que puedas darles más tiempo a las cosas que extrañas una vez que salgas? Ver television en Ingles ayuda a aprender el idioma.

What I Exactly Miss

What I exactly miss from my home are the things from my home, like my loved ones. For example: My aunties, my uncles, my friends, my siblings, my father, and my mother. What I miss is my entire family. I mainly miss them now that I am locked up and I can't be near my family. I also miss my bed because sleeping in these mattresses is not the same as sleeping in our own bed.

I also miss sleeping in very late because I got accustomed to sleeping in late at my house. I also miss my television because I used to watch television in Spanish and now I only watch television in English because almost everyone in here speaks English.

From The Beat: We all miss our loved ones when we don't have them with us. Did you miss them when you were on the outs? We are egoistic. When we have things, we don't care about them until we see that we have lost them. We hope that this experience helps you recuperate and give more importance to the things that deserve your dedication. Do you believe that you can give more time to the things that you miss once you get out? Watching television in English helps to learn the language.

Lo Que Quiero Hacer

Q-onda homies! Aquí escribiendo de nuevo. Pues mira que aquí cada día se me hace una eternidad y todavía me falta mucho tiempo por salir de aquí. Tengo ganas de correr de aquí pero tengo que quedarme a terminar este programa y luego poder hacer lo que quiero como poder fumar hasta morir, tomar mucho, pero todo esto lo voy a hacer con mucho cuidado. Va homies, les escribo la próxima semana. Pues me tengo que ir homitos. Si algún día sales ten cuidado con lo que haces. Ponte trucha.

From The Beat: Sinceramente estamos seguro que tienes un gran problema con las drogas y el licor. Tienes que darte cuenta de lo que dices, porque a nadie le gustaria morir drogado o emborrachado. ¿Te has dado cuenta cuantas gente han muerto por andar bajo la influencia de algunos de estos tipos de drogas? Deberias de informarte muy bien antes de decir algo — o hacer algo — no apropiado.

What I Want To Do

What's up homies! Here I am, once again writing. Well, look, every day in here feels like an eternity for me and I still have a long way to go before I get out of here. I have the urge to run from this place, but I have to stay and finish this program and later on be able to do whatever I want like be able to smoke until I die, drink a lot, but I am going to do all this with lots of caution.

All right homies, I'll write to y'all next week. Well, I got to go homies. If you get out one day, be careful with what you do. Put your guard up.

From The Beat: With all sincerity, we're positive that you have a huge problem with drugs and with liquor. You have to realize what you are saying because no one would like to die all drugged up or overdose. Have you ever realized how many people have died from being under the influence of some of these kinds of drugs? You should really inform yourself very well about these topics before you say something — or do something — inappropriate.

Yo Extraño Todo De Mi Casa

Yo extraño todo de mi casa especialmente mis seres queridos que son mis familia, mis amigos y en especial mi madre.

Extraño todo porque allá hago lo que quiero sin pedir permiso. Pero de todos modos, esta semana salgo para una casa de grupo y creo que esta pesadía de la cárcel se termino para mí.

Un saludo a todos lo que son de Honduras, especialmente a los de La Villa Fraca. Les doy este consejo: No se aguiten que el tiempo pasa e igual que van a salir. Al rato, los guacho afuera.

From The Beat: Esperamos que hagas tu tiempo bien en ese grupo. No desaproveches esa oportunidad. Acuerdate que no a todos le dan oportunidades como estas. Cuida a tu familia y haz lo mejor para hacerlos sentir bien a ellos.

I Miss Everything From My House

I miss everything from my house, especially my loved ones who are my family, my friends, and in particular, my mother.

I miss everything because over there, I do what I want to do without having to ask anyone for permission. But anyways, I'm getting out this week to go to a Group Home and I believe that this nightmare of being in jail is over for me.

A shout-out goes out to everyone from Honduras, especially those from La Villa Franca. I give y'all these words of advice: Don't feel sad because time goes by and y'all are going to get out, too. I'll holla at y'all later. I'll look out for y'all on the outs.

From The Beat: We hope that you do your time well in this group. Don't waste this opportunity. Keep in mind that not everyone is given opportunities like this one. Take care of your family and do what's best so you can make them feel good.

WILD BILL BARNES

Beginning with the deeply moving, "Dead Man's Song" (imagining one's last day before being put to death by the state), and progressing through "A Miracle" (life itself), then "I Listened To A Poem" (about not listening), and finally to the brief but powerful "Warren Zevon Is Gone" (an anti-cigarette smoking epitaph), "Wild Bill" Barnes takes us on a poetic tour de force. His style is minimalist, but his themes are anything but. We know little about this prisoner, except that he writes us that he's "in bad need of someone — anyone — who will 'take an interest' in me..." Anyone so inclined to want to correspond with this talented poet currently imprisoned in a North Carolina prison, please contact The Beat.

A Miracle

The little bees
Buzzing around
Doing their work
Upon the verdant field
As God has assigned...

How lovely it is to behold them
And to contemplate
The Divine Spark
They carry within
That über-mysterious essence of all
That we call

LIFE

And not only lovely
But comforting, as well
To be reassured
While watching the little bees

That each and every one
Of God's little critters
Is indeed
A miracle.

The lemmings merrily smoked on
Paying silent tribute
To the domestic terrorist
organizations
Known as RJR and Philip Morris

Warren Zevon Is Gone

I heard, this morning, that Warren Zevon
Had passed away
Yesterday, somewhere in LA
(Poor, poor pitiful him)

Dead from lung cancer
At 56

But, walking down the sidewalk
I beheld the suckers
(Both literal and figurative)
Blissfully puffing away...

Unaware and, probably, uncaring
The lemmings merrily smoked on
Paying silent tribute
To the domestic terrorist organizations
Known as RJR and Philip Morris

Who had just claimed
Yet another victim

Dead Man's Song

I hear the heavy footsteps
Of those coming to claim my life
Ice clutches at my heart
As I wonder if my soul will survive...

How it all came to this
I'll surely never know
Placed up upon a cross
The first kick when I hit the ground...

I wonder if I'll be able to face it
And take it like a man
Or will I break and plead
And ask why no one can understand?

Well, it's surely no joke
Tonight my earthly lie will grimly end
Still carcass to be carried out
For eternity to spend...

And I wonder when and if
I shall awaken
And if my light will shine again
Upon some distant Aidenn

And I wonder further
Just how they can do this
Are their hearts even darker than mine?
And, upon Judgment Day,
Just who will call out to whom
Across the Great Divide...

I Listened To A Poem

I listened to a poem
On The Writer's Almanac this morning...

Or, at least, tried...

Something about a furry little black caterpillar
Crawling upon a desk or something
And how the poet was fascinated by it

And it was good
Yet, in spite of myself,
My mind simply wandered
Off somewhere
Far away
And unconnected

I can't even recall where...

Then, towards the end,
My mind returned
To the task
At hand

Yet I was angry
With my mind
For betraying me
And wandering off
Just when I needed it most

And I was angrier still
Over the "missing" portion of the good poem
Now gone from me
Forever...

JARED D. Last week we featured several of this next poet's work in *The Beat* and our readers received it well. Then, we were going through our desks this week and found two more poems from him that we never published. Now that he's a part of *The Beat* family, we thought we should leave no poem unpublished, so of course we did what any group of people with good taste would do, publish these amazing poems. He gives a story about a child and the advice he gets from his father. And he closes with a great poem about friendship. We can tell he's had some memorable friends in his life. He writes to us from the Department Of Human Services Division Of Juvenile Justice Services in Salt Lake City, Utah. We hope to hear more from him.

Friendship

Throughout life everyone makes friends
Some friends come while others go
But one thing that you all should know
A true friend whether you usually see them
Or contact is at its ends
Only the best of friends will be there forever
Regardless of what gets in their way they will always
Cherish and glorify in your memory 'till the end of their
days
Always will true friends share a bond and never say
never
Now of course as kids we grow up and our lives change
If the friendship was true, the memory will still reside
As surely as thought will guide
So when you see them on the corner trying to sponge
A few bucks you give him and a life felt hug
Talk of happy times past
Over a bit of breakfast
Then forever more will your heart give a tug
For those who are true friends will be there forever on
end
You should all keep a true friend close to your heart
If you do this, your friendship will be smart
With an undying love that will never bend
For this is the true quality of a friend

Randy's Daddy

From bed side Randy
Saw his dying daddy
When off the table grouped father's finger
And laid it gently on his son with a solemn linger
And from dad's dying lips comes the simple sound
Son, let me tell you now slightly lifting his great mound
Do not live your life as I have done
But instead of following me just run
And this wasn't all Randy said while dying
But Randy was too busy not crying
For he thought of the things his daddy did
To others and him who was just a kid
Now daddy said as death drew near
And Randy formed a hidden tear
Now my boy please let me know
Where I've been you will never go
Just remember this as life ticks by
All lifetime will pass you by
Don't hurt or harm others and you'll be true
And now I beg you at great length
Don't show your strength
When in an argument with any
Or like mine you're life won't be worth a penny
Honor your children and your spouse
And all those in and out of the house
Don't be afraid to admit you're wrong
And don't take too long
Never raise a hand in anger
Or you, like me, will be in danger
You're not a coward day or night
Now I say please promise me this
That the way I treated others you'll miss
Just listen to your heart
With every existing part
Remember this my son for I am now gone
Before the light of another dawn
Now go my son and live life well
So you will not have to live in a cell
Just know above all
I humbly call
My relentless sorrow

If nobody gives us a chance then we must do
anything in our power to provide ourselves and
our families with their needs.

LIL' TYSON Formerly in YGC, we are used to the poetry of Lil' Tyson. His subject matter usually has to do with his criminal activity with his brother, his life and his love. This time he takes aim at the government's attempts to control our borders with Mexico. He points out that Mexican immigrants (both legal and illegal) do a majority of the dirtiest work we have, and that without them, our economy would be in trouble. Lil' Tyson writes us from Glen Mills School in Concordville, Pennsylvania.

We The Solution Not The Problem

Despite all the hard work and labor, us Latinos have done, we still continue to be seen as the enemy. Yeah, we illegally got here, but for one purpose: to find a better life. All we search for is a better future, but yet we get discriminated.

Lately, I've read that many illegal Latinos have been getting deported and that the border patrol is getting stricter. They're giving them bigger guns and building bigger fences. What the hell is that about? Do they not see that we are not the problem, but we are the solution?

We enter the U.S. in search for job, and at that, they give us the most messed up jobs, but we are down to work. From picking fruits in the fields to cleaning a rich family's house. Ain't that some shhh?

A'ight, so most of the young Latino population who illegally stay in the U.S. get involved in criminal activity. But for the same reason that we are being discriminated and not given a chance to work, so we turn to the street hustle and get money our way. Like I said we some hard workers in search for a job.

If nobody gives us a chance then we must do anything in our power to provide ourselves and our families with their needs.

Many of us are tired of working for low wages just because we ain't got a green card, social security number or anything of the such. That ain't shhh. Just evidence that you're a citizen. Man, forget that shhh. If it wasn't for us, many wouldn't have houses, fruit, or a clean mansion. Without us, many companies of factories would go downhill. Just take a look at the movie, "A Day Without Mexicans." That would show you how much work we do, and how much y'all need us. But yet y'all tryna get rid of us.

That shhh ain't right, but y'all see. Ignore our boycotts and continue with y'all deportation mission. Time will tell. Just remember we are the solution not the problem.

CHANTELL PRICE

Chantell Price — The Priest — comes roaring back in this issue with five poems, each of which packs a wallop! Some, like "Can't Stand This" and "What My Bottles Of Pills Say" describe the pain of so many imprisoned people in short, but powerful phrases. In "Seventh Of April," he writes a poetic ballad, a sweet memory from a better time. "Dear Minority" is a passionate indictment of the system, and "If I Wash My Hands" is like a prayer. The Priest displays his versatility from Corcoran State Prison.

Seventh Of April

Cool breeze... potent drink... fly chick —
Seventh of April might turn out to be the shhh!
I took a sip of my Sky an' eyed Connie's super model body
The half moon illuminated her striking face softly
as she stirred her VSOP and coffee
She talked of a summer vacation.. sending thoughts of my
own summer,
once again racing through my mind
Honies in tight clothes!
Crowded dance floors!
Bumpin' stereos!
Blowin' herb till I can't blow no mo'!
Twenty-four more lil' ol' days to go, and — "Summer, summer,
summertime!"
The Fresh Prince's hit suddenly flared in my mind — but died
quickly as high beams spontaneously assaulted Connie's
porch.
I braced myself in case it was pork...
then felt like a dork as a faded blue Ford Escort surged
past.
Unseen entities frolicked in Connie's neighbor's unkept
grass
as crickets sang for the lovers of the night..
Connie sighted my tension over the Escort,
an' allowed her silk smooth pink lips to support an amused
smirk.
"What?" I replied to her smirk, flickin' the butt of an expired
chronic joint.
The night air was anointed with spring scents that tangoed
with Connie's peach perfume, as she did over to loom breath
sharing close to my face.
"What! What! That's what you always say...
like I didn't recognize that look on yo face!"
Faint alcohol from her lips... spring scents... hint of
peach...
mixed with chronic and passion —
April seventh was about to get crackin'!
To my satisfaction — "Who you gone be shackin' with while
I'm away?" Connie questioned.
and decided to lick my bottom lip before I could reply.
"Just my left and right hand... and maybe my left foot!"
Hooking her arms around my waist, Connie released a
burst of musical laughter at my reply, and locked her moon-
pointed eyes on mine.
"In that case... I better give you one more taste of the real
thing!"
"Anything else would be uncivilized!" I declared, thinking of
a summer without a taste of Connie was so unfair...

Can't Stand This

Tears... down my face!
A cat in a rat race...
No pace!
No pace!

Running hard and fast...
but still come in last!
No pace!
No pace!

Everyone is ahead...
Will never be able to catch up!
No pace!
No pace!

First place is better than last...run fast
And faster!
Still bested by bastards...
No pace!
No pace!

Pace to stay in the race — the race is no longer fun...
Taking third... it seems absurd!
Here they come... turning the corner!
No pace!
No pace!

Legs tired...
Lungs contain no air...
Run!
Pace!
Run the race!
Become the race...

If I Wash My Hands

If I wash my hands... will this go away...?
For my sins to be forgiven... is it truly necessary to
pray...?
Why play the game where they call me names get
away...?
What will I say at judgment day...?
Will the day come when the strong will feast on the
weak...?
Will I ever run the sky... and eat the meat that was
meant for me...?
If I was my hands... will these thoughts go away...?

What My Bottles Of Pills Say

Pain I know... the pain of a thousand past lives...
and a thousand lives to come...
Pain I know... the pain of envying things beyond
my comprehension... therefore the pain of envying
nothing...
Pain I know... the pain of having the beast of rage feast
upon my sou, while my mind and heart watch helplessly
—
Oh... the pain I know!
The pain of being trapped in tainted flesh!
The pain of desire!
The pain of the flame of reason — which boils my mind...
determined to make a stew called purpose!
Oh... I know pain...
Know it in its many forms of experience — experienced
it to the point of delirium!
Experienced it to the point that my friends hear it in my
voice... see it in my posture... recognize it in my eyes —
Oh, I know pain!
Pain I know... and my countless bottles of pills will tell
you the same...

If I wash my hands...
will this go away...?
For my sins to be
forgiven... is it truly
necessary to pray...?

Dear Minority

Hello! My name is Victim
And I'm currently a pawn in the justice system —
Which I find repulsing more and more, on a daily basis!
I'm repulsed at the depth of corruption the justice system!
Repulsed by the way it is using its infectious touch to pass
on corruption to society!
Passing on subtle forms of corruption every time they falsely
convicted a person...
an' expect not to fill that person's heart with hatred!
Passing on corruption every time a C/O assaults an inmate...
an' expects him or her not to take it out on society; or his/her
family!
Passing it on every time a social worker breaks up a
family...
an' expects those children to feel some connection to life
— to society!
It's repulsing to think about how the justice system
intentionally infected itself by
doing away with crime and corruption by "any means
necessary!"
Gulping down gallons of "system induced" crime and
corruption at any cost —
just to quench its thirst for "false" justice!
While overlooking the fact that... to battle corruption with
corruption —
is to be surrounded by corruption!
Surrounded by a sheet of darkness that they created by
blowing out the candle of morally correct justice!
A candle which they blew out because they wanted to "win
for once!"
Blew it out because they wanted to use the darkness as

CHANTELL PRICE (CONT.)

"cover" to ambush their enemy!
Only... they didn't realize that they wouldn't be able to clearly
see their enemy
without the sacred flame of pure justice — or did they?
And rather if they did or didn't comprehend the side effects
of their "actions"...
look what the justice system has become — "corruption!"
And what did their ill-thought-out "actions" cost us...?
I'll tell you what it cost — the generations of tomorrow!
Personal and moral beliefs!
And the greatest price of all: our comprehension of what pure
justice is!
What pure justice means in this cesspool of corruption,
which breeds West Nile carrying mosquitoes...
that suck in honesty, honor, morals, and pure beliefs -
injecting in turn:
corrupt nature, greed, dishonor and self-righteous!
And now... what's the "new motive" for their wicked misfired
actions?
Self-preservation!
To make us believe that we have to live with this "system-
induced" cesspool of corruption!
To make us believe that we don't have the shovels (abilities),
the dirt (intelligence), the strength (morals),
and the time (faith) ---- to fill in this cesspool of system-self-
preservation-corruption;
which breeds the mosquitoes that terrorize us in the darkness
of corruption they created!

LIL' ROBERT

Usually we dread reading love poems
because we know that most of the time
they're fake. What we mean by that is we know that incarceration can cause
people to say and do things they wouldn't normally do when they're free. We
have our families takes from us and we miss them. We leave our lovers behind
and get horny in jail and want to make sure we're coming home to something,
so we get all lovey-dovey. Does this sound familiar? Well, this love poem is
different because though he deemed it 'game' in his letter, we know that
somewhere in that poem rang his true feelings. We respect that more than
anything — a person willing to express himself regardless of the situation. Lil'
Robert writes to us from Santa Rita (Alameda County Jail) in Dublin, CA.

What's Up Beat?

First and foremost let me give my love and respect to
those doing time in the pinta and county jail. Well, what's
up? It's me Lil' Robert from Livermore comin' at you
from Santa Rita over here in Dublin. I'm doin' time on a
case for sellin' dope and it's my first time in County. I've
been down for almost 3 months. The D.A. gave me a deal
for I.C. take 9 months w/ a 5-year felony probation. I'll
do 6 months or 9. I took it. I thought it was a good deal
considering that's the lowest there gonna give me for
getting caught with a quarter pound. And another good
thing about it is that I do all my time in county jail.

Well I'm writing you tonight because I wanna give
those who are having a hard time expressing feelings
to those loved ones of theirs that this poem that I am
sending you should help them out. It's called "Feelings."
And that when you can't find the words just look at this
poem and the words that you can't think of or find to
write to that loved one will be right here. It should give
you a head start as you will be able to open your mind
and the words will sometimes just come to you.

So let this poem lace you up on some game. So until
next time that pen and paper meet, I'm out like this!
Peace!

Feelings

Endlessly, you inspire me
By what you say and do
Thus, with great sincerity
I'll tell my feelings true

You always use your elegance
To raise my self esteem
You help me boost my confidence
To realize a dream

You comfort me in times of stress;
You hold me tenderly
Your soothing words do then suppress
All my anxiety

You love me with a passion grace
Which gives me ecstasy
And there within your warm embrace
My spirit wanders free

In mind and body I do thrive
Within your loving sphere
And easily I do survive
Each and every passing year

So now you know in words sincere
My feelings pure and true
They reaffirm what should be clear
That I am in love with you

JAMES CRAWFORD

We really respect this next writer's opinion because we can tell that he doesn't just come to an idea on the fly and start writing about it. He's the kind of writer who mulls something over for a while, or at least until he's content in studying it enough to explain it to the rest of us. We say this because each one of this incredible thinker's pieces seem to be thoughtful and consistent in its message — a message we are more than proud to publish in our newsletter. This week he speaks about the set up of our society and how it's designed to keep the oppressed, oppressed and the rich capitalizing. It's a very strong opinion so we know there'll be people who both agree and disagree with his thoughts. But regardless what side of the fence you're on, you can't argue the fact that Beat favorite, James Crawford is an excellent writer. So enjoy as we already have... If you don't already know, James Crawford writes to us from California State Prison in Corcoran, CA.

Meanings Of All Ism's Used In This Piece

Capitalism - the economic system in which the ownership and exploitation of wealth are left largely in private hands. That means those who control all of the world resources and means of production for distribution. For example corporations along with the support of U.S government racist policies can distribute these means of production as they please, especially since they have monopolized all these resources. For example water, good medicine, jobs, homes, land all the bare necessities that sustains life they have under their control.

Why would you want to own water unless you plan on selling it for profit and the question here is how can something free be made for sale? By controlling its distribution and poorly distributing it, meaning tap water in the United States has become contaminated, that people literally been forced to buy their water. The exploitation of a people come into play because the same corporations and government who distribute the free water. The exploitation of a people comes into play because the same corporations and government who distribute the free water is also on the other end selling water.

How they're able to force you into Burger King, McDonald's or Wal-Mart job is by depriving you of those jobs that will give you financial security. This way they exploit you into modern day slave labor where you work for low wages and longer hours allowing the corporations and the corrupted racist government to run off with all the wealth. Capitalism is a corrupted economic system that exploits and demeans humanity and very genocidal in practice.

Racism - is the systematic exploitation, oppression or dehumanization of one people by another based on race. There is only one people on earth capable of the wholesale oppression and exploitation of any other and that is humans who classify themselves as whites...

Colonialism - a common form of imperialism. This is the process by which a imperialist power politically controls economically exploits a third world nation. The capitalistic country, which imposes colonialism, is called a colony. Europeans control in Africa. For example; South Africa, Botswana, Uganda, etc. And the United States control of New Africans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Native Americans, South Americans are examples of colonialism.

Neo-Colonialism - an imperialistic practice where by the colonizer gives sham-political freedom to a colony, politically, economically, and 'culturally' through a firm economic strangle hold. Most often the colonizer implements Neo-Colonialism with the help of the Black and Brown, or Asian Bourgeoisie middle class intellectual 'puppets' from the colony who are helped into political leadership by the colonizer to manipulate the masses...

Fascism - is the U.S government in complete disguise, while watching all activities of the people and placing tracking devices, cameras, bugs, etc. to watch and control all aspects of the people in the world activities, just look around by

This The Front Sheet To Young Minds

This is not to say that all whites are racists or to generalize them at all, because that would be foolish. Especially since many have shown their dedication toward humanity, but all the same we can't deny 'our' reality simply because we don't want to hurt the feelings of those whites who are 'good' and just as exploited as Blacks, Mexicans, etc. who happen to be the majority of the underclass societies in the United States. So it would do them justice as well to become politically conscious because although whites are the most privileged in the world, due to the atrocities committed against mankind by their forefathers and 'now' the white ruling class, they too will suffer the consequences behind the actions of that one percent white ruling class.

Just as many of people of Color has suffered for generation, simply because of their color. The average white can just look to the world and should be able to see clearly that there is a strong resentment throughout the world for the U-S policies and that 1 percent white ruling class, so much so it is literally outright attacks of whites in some places in the world. So with that said it's all about what's right and rejecting that which is wrong. Regardless if it's in your best interest wrong is wrong and right is right. So remember only a fool can be misguided and we all been that... well, at least those who know what I mean...

manipulating crime in the media, for example, gangs, sexual predators, terrorism, etc. They have been able to put all under surveillance by the government — the phone conversations, no matter who you are, are being traced, TV's, cars, etc. with chips in them in order to be tracked down. Cameras being placed in stores, street corners it's just a matter of time before they're able to look directly into your home. They all have spy satellites that can watch the whole world. This is fascism and why it's an expansion of Capitalism because their whole purpose is to watch and destroy anyone who poses a threat to Capitalism. This is why the fascist police since this country inception of Capitalism has always been enemies to the underclass people of the world.

Classism - is a system that capitalism created for example the haves and have nots all are divided according to their financial status: underclass, middle class, and the upper class which is controlled by the one percent ruling class.

White Power - is the ideology and practice, which is the ultra-right wing belief that humans who classify themselves as white are inherently superior to all other human beings and therefore the planet earth and everything on it is theirs as a birthright. The other people of the earth are there solely to be free labor (slaves) or targets for extermination (genocide). The ultimate ends of white power are to have a planet inhabited exclusively by blond haired, blue eyed, white humans.

White Supremacy - is an institutionalized system that is under complete white control. For example, all institutions in the U.S. and abroad is under white control if one need an education or a job one must seek their institutions this go on and on. One need a bank loan it's their institutions, if one want to rent or buy a home, land, etc. all under their control... Which make it easy for them to discriminate against those they're racist against. See how the French has shut its citizens of Color out of its economic system. Paris is a perfect example...

Imperialism - is when developing superpower countries use their military forces to conquer underdeveloped countries simply for the purpose of colonizing and exploitation of that country's people and land. Europe and the United States have used their military might simply for this purpose.

Young Minds Are You Ready For This

We must realize that our problems don't only stem from our inadequate education, but from our inability to become politically conscious. That very inability has plagued our parent's lives, our lives, and will claim the next generation of poor Blacks, Mexicans, Asians, etc. Being politically conscious will empower us economically, culturally, educationally, and militarily and so on.

If you truly want to become aware of what's really going on, and why your world seems to be that of the underclass oppressed/repressed societies then just look to the power that govern 'us' then you could get a grasp or a clear understanding of the so-called (land of the free) and its policies that govern us all. Then you'll realize that it's not by accident that we're the poorest, the most oppressed, the most incarcerated, the most uneducated and on and on. Through the U.S. government's racist policies there is an orchestrated organized racist agenda to oppress and destroy all people of the underclass societies especially those of Color. This is why you all must learn about Capitalism, Neo-Colonialism, Racism, Colonialism, Fascism, Classism, Imperialism, White Power, and White Supremacy.

All that I've mentioned is what you need to 'learn' immediately, it is the political practice of genocide that is the root of all our social problems, for example, poor education, no jobs, etc. In creating policies that in turn create oppressive/repressive conditions for our people forcing many into drug use, criminal activities, violent activities, and dehumanizing them at the same time. The practice of genocide is no stranger to humanity, which is why we must not forget the genocides that occurred in the past.

For instance, the one that wiped out 85 percent of the American Natives population allowing the white racist settlers to lay claim to North America while colonizing South America and Central America. They used the disease 'small pox' to achieve this goal which today they're using HIV/AIDS to wipe out the African population in order to lay claim to the land. The similarities are too real.

There's 8 million white racist British settlers in South Africa, they control all the raw materials and resources economics and all the land that is rich in soil. While 95% of the South African natives live in extreme poverty with no bare necessities — not even clean water. 5.1 million of them is HIV/AIDS positive. 'Now', it don't take no rocket scientist to figure out what's going on during the 'colonial era' and apartheid South Africa. African population was at the mercy of the white racist British settlers. They murdered millions and raped children — women even men so these brutal murders did everything in their power to demean and terrorize the South African people. So it's no surprise that with the millions of interracial Blacks in South Africa that exist today that rape was a normal practice, yet the white racist British settlers don't suffer from any AIDS or HIV crisis, why?

Just like with the disease 'small pox' they used it to wipe out the Native American people, after discovering what kind of weapon it would be against society that wasn't advanced in technology, which meant they was defenseless against small pox. Europeans had suffered from small pox, and got it under control in Europe. So they had a cure when they deliberately released it on the American Natives. These same people was able to take control of North America through this genocide.

All that is occurring is history repeating itself. They want the African land and will murder everyone in it to get it so this is why becoming politically conscious will let you get into the minds of the oppressors as well as why they control all of the world's resources and deprive those they're racist against, Blacks, Mexicans, Asians, etc. Once they conquer Iraq's oil it'll only be used to continue fueling their white power agenda in further building their white empire while depriving nonwhite people. This is why all white politicians support this war in Iraq. It empowers their racist agenda, in remaining a super-power at humanities expense. Once you've studied and become politically conscious then you can see that through policies, this racist government does not have your best interest at heart but actually introduce bill after bill to your detriment, creating oppressive/repressive conditions amongst poor people throughout the world. The media serves propaganda that manipulate the masses minds, while dehumanizing the poor through their criminal element. This way they can numb the masses for when the fascist racist police torture and kill them.

The U.S. Government and all of corporate America and its fascists: military, army, marines, navy, and local police are all functioning under the ideology of a capitalist racist fascist imperialist system. Which is exclusively controlled and ran by white males. Right wing conservatives which make up the Republican Party as well as the so-

JAMES CRAWFORD (CONT.)

called liberal leftist all support these racist policies, so don't allow titles to manipulate you — that's why they call it politics.

As you can see the things or issues they claim to fight against each other on are irrelevant to the underclass societies, yet they all agree on policies that further oppress the poor. Yet they're filling the U.S. Supreme Court with those who share the same ideology of the conquerors of this country meaning slavery, lynching, and Jim Crow, and Willie Lynch practice will be reinstated, many already have. For example, execution of those from the poor class societies are the only people executed, which ain't nothing but modern day lynchings. We live in a segregated society, keeping Jim Crow live and well, playing race against race in order to exploit all. As you can see with the minimum wage jobs exploiting the Blacks and Mexicans ain't nothing but modern day slavery. They can resolve anything on the face of this earth if they wanted to, but their racism and capitalist system only encourage that they be the enemy to humanity... white racist politicians aim is to oppress and repress, dehumanize as well as wipe out all people of Color wherever they may be.

In the recent PBS special, which aired 11-2-05 to 11-4-05 called 'RX for Survival and Global Health Challenge'. Don't be fooled because although they come off as the savior in the show, they're actually the 'killers'. It featured those who are suffering from diseases around the world HIV/AIDS, polio, small pox, etc. These diseases just happen to be in what we call the underdeveloped countries or continents. It's not a coincidence that they're all people of Color: India, Asia, Africa, South America who is suffering from diseases in alarming numbers yet, all these countries and continents been under white rule for hundreds of years (colonialism) who have the medicine and technologies to bring these societies to that status of modern day countries, but you don't help or save what you want wiped out.

So many people throughout the world realize that the problem with the world is the white ruling class. This is why people of color is becoming more and more conscious by the day, by becoming politically conscious you're able to challenge and organize against these policies that are racist and oppressive. By the way, how many moral and Christian folks will allow people to live in such conditions? The answer is 'none' these ain't Christians. Please don't allow them to 'fool' you by showing that one percent of our people who actually are successful because the truth is that 99% of 'our' people live below the poverty line globally and in the States. So 'education' and political consciousness is our ticket to freedom.

They demonize the Taliban who they trained and Al' Qaeda, who practice totalitarian, against the Muslim or Arab people, yet they trained them and exploit this same totalitarian practice ten times more effective then Al' Qaeda. They control every aspect of our lives: mentally, physically, and spiritually, and when they can't, they outright kill you or place you in their concentration camps. It's the white way or no way.

Manipulation through propaganda, torture, terror in order to keep you in check when the racist policies are instituted. They bought Telemundo, BET, Telefutura, and Univision in order to control what's going into your mind. This why they have all white programs in respects to movies, etc, or don't have any programs that are educational or show the news from a Latino or Black perspective and these are Black and Latino channels. Their dictatorship come from their economic strangle hold on our communities they got our children literally wanting to have white babies because they have demonized the Blacks and Latino people so bad. So embracing your true culture is part of your political consciousness.

I remember when I told a Mexican that my slave name is James Crawford and my real name is Ahmidiha Dams, which ties me back to the continent of Africa, which is why the white colonizer went to extremes to rename all slaves, this cut them off from their true language and land. This Mexican didn't know that he too had been renamed and colonized. He thought Hernandez, Albert was his heritage name 'til one of his O.G. homies told him that the American natives, spoke Nahuatl language and just like every name the Africans have, mean something — this was true for the natives as well.

So controlling what goes in your mind, they're able to dictate your behavior. So let's put a stop to this cycle of ignorance and embrace education and then we can put an end to this cesspool of death that plague our people. Every last one of you incarcerated know 100 people that was slain, now that's genocide. Retain your mental freedom by becoming politically conscious and it'll put you on the path of gaining your physical freedom. The Arabs know what their fighting for — 'freedom'.

WILLIAM GRAJEDA

William Grajeda is well respected around these parts. And if you choose to read on, you'll understand why. He's one of those OG Beat writers we love hearing from because he always gives us something to stop and think about. In his first piece, a tribute to his mother for Mother's Day, we can see his wonderful heart permeating through the paper at us as he shows his gratitude for what must be an amazing woman to have birthed such an extraordinary person. And in his second piece he reminds us of why he's incredible in the first place — having a conversation with the streets, William reveals how confusing the relationship between the streets and the person posted on them is. We appreciate his insight and are sure you will too... Our old friend William Grajeda writes us from Santa Rita County Jail in Alameda County where he is fighting for his freedom.

Rumors Of The Street

'What it do... what it do... what's the biz... life behind the walls.'

Greetings my Beat Within readers; how are you lil' g's and young ninjas living inside the jungle with the beast! You mad at the world, you mad at me, did I forget to tell you about those never-endin' days, those stressed out nights in the cage! Locked down... all that time to think!

No more handing out flowers on Mother's Day 'cause you locked up again, no more side show parades you stressin' out in a cage... no more blowin' trees, pickin' up breezys while you stunt cause 'O.G.' forgot to tell you there is a price to pay livin' the life of ghetto mazes, bloodstained cages and Benjamin rages...

"Did you forget to listen or you just can't hear? I think you just don't care anymore."

Moms locked up gettin' high, pops stretched out in the game, lost his life to the graves... Who the hell are you? Who you think you is? You don't know me! I'ma bounce back, clap that, hit this and snatch that money sack out tha gutter to do it big... pop that collar one time, I'ma burn that scraper into the paint!

Think about the consequences!? What the hell is that? All I see is what's going on, all I feel is the rage and pain inside of me! Think before you act, what the hell do you think I did? I live in the streets gettin' money is how I eat... They don't hire broken home juveniles or ex-felonies! They just leave us on the corner to fend for our own... haven't you noticed? I am that kid you always see up down that same project, ghetto, street! Let me guess, you must've missed me! Yeah, the only attention we seem to get is from the po-po or the ambulance... Moms in and out, lost high in the street, pops is a womanizer, child abusing beast that never learned how to stand on two feet...

You think you know me. You think you know what I am about. I haven't even reached the heart of the truth yet, you peep me... I ain't you... you don't know me, "Stop thinkin' you feel me and pretending to understand what I've just begun to speak... I see right through you in a blink, you ain't real and you can never understand who we be, so don't pretend you feel or see me..."

"I am the system, I am the jungle, I am the street, I am poverty, I am that felony, I am that key, I am that G-ride, I am that tax fee, I am just tryna eat... I am that broken home, I am that O.G., I am that ninja, that juvenile G, I am that truth, I am that lie, I am that gangsta tough outside, I am that youngster scared inside, pretending like we never cry — I am that kid with a million dreams, that same ghetto kid with no real hope to believe that any of those dreams could actually come true; after all, I am the product of the ghetto life, the project seed, I was born on the bloodstained curbs of sidewalks you never see."

Happy Mother's Day

Here is a dozen roses, a box of your favorite chocolates and a bottle of sweet perfume mother... 'Happy Mother's Day'

Hugs and kisses, thoughts and wishes... shared memories of days never quite past — always living in the smiles of our reflections, I love you mom, Happy Mother's Day...

You gave me life, you taught me strife, you taught me how to survive — you held me tight, you let me go, you whispered endearments of love and affection, you showed me that life is sometimes cold... I love you mom, 'Happy Mother's Day'.

When times were hard you tried your best, when the streets were dark you showed me how to make my way; you taught me good and bad, you taught me happiness and sad, through it all, you always said you loved me with a hug and a kiss, you always said you cared with a handful of candy and that sweet mother's touch of genuine care, I love you mom, 'Happy Mother's Day'.

Blueberry muffins, almond Rocha, and Cadillacs — collect calls, long journeys in the street fighting the beast, pain and tears throughout the years, desperate times and prison grimes... loser dad and cruel husband, welfare times and fast money trips; even though we were not always together, but more apart... you and me, ma — one of a kind; I wouldn't have it any other way, you are the best mother in the universe in my eyes, I wouldn't change it for the world...

I love you infinitely mother. Happy Mother's Day.

"Do you hear your mother's screaming? Do you feel cruel pain? Do you see your loved ones bleeding? Do you feel that scar from that last ass whoopin' you got?"

"You think you know me? You think you know what I am about, where I am from, who I am? You can't see straight, you're too busy trying to give me your good advice... you're too busy trying to be to nice, you're too busy trying to make yourself feel good about that Salvation Army donation you gave last year, you're too busy trying to understand something you can never feel."

You ask me why, I am asking why, what is this mess? Who are you? I know who you are. What do you mean? Who am I? Are you blind, deaf, and dumb? Did I stutter or have you swept me so far underneath your dirty rug that you lost sight of that part of life; or, is it your lost humanity?

Democrats, Republicans, broken down school systems, welfare handouts, prison terms, CYA commits, Proposition 21, what the hell is that? I am tryna eat, I'm tryna stunt... stop speaking a language I don't understand, I am from the street that's the only thing I know.

You think you know me? You think you understand? You know who we be, you know how to fix this plaque in society that's been going on for hundreds of years! I am dying inside, I am crying inside from seeing all my people trying to survive...

While you work out those miracles or simplicities of the mind, I be puttin' some food on the table so we can eat, make enough ends to find a hotel or apt. to sleep, who can knock me for adding a new pair of kicks on my feet... The street believes materials are a necessity...

You think you know me, you think you know what I'm about, I haven't even reached the heart of the truth yet, you peep me? I see right through you in a blink, you ain't real, you can never understand who we be, I ain't you, you don't know me. Stop thinking you feel me, stop pretending to understand what I've just only begun to speak... Rumors Of The Street

Progression of Culture

What is culture? The Webster dictionary describes it as the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group. Culture is an evolving animal. In the past civil war era- particularly in the 1950's and '60's the cultural identity of the African- American found itself in question, divided by assimilation and separatism positions.

Assimilations views, as personified by civil rights leaders Frederick Douglas and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., did not advocate a loss of identity, but rather an embracement of American ideals while retaining a unique sense of self and cultural pride.

Where separatists like Marin Delaney claimed that the only way to civil and cultural freedom for the African-American was to create a separate, powerful black capitalist state – preferably in Africa.

Frederick Douglas believed civil freedom to be present in everyday American life. Justice according to Douglas is morally demanded, and once certain human rights had been set (i.e. The Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights) a separate case for individual Black rights was unnecessary. This view was later expounded on by Dr. King Jr. Dr Martin Luther King Jr. believed in obtaining civil justice through non-violent, lawful means. He utilized the laws and beliefs of a domineering culture to obtain equal footing for his own.

On the other end of the spectrum we have Martin Delaney and Malcolm X, two of the staunch supporters of Black Power. As I have previously noted, Martin Delaney proposed that the post civil war Negroes only hope was a separate nation in which the African Americans could gain the respect due, not through social guilt or the technicalities of American law, but through the advancements and accomplishments of his own culture. Malcolm was more for making a stand in American than for fleeing it. Although he too believed that African-American should make it a goal to one day see their ancestral homeland, he also fought to obtain equality through civil disobedience, calling upon natural rights and divine law. He urged Black America to embrace their heritage and, "affirm themselves as human beings, no longer viewing their bodies, minds, and souls through White lenses, and believing themselves capable of taking control of their own destinies."

Today, oppression had shifted. The economically disenfranchised, whether black, white, or purple, are the new underdogs. Although this class is made mostly of Black and Latin ethnicities, we see a mutation in culture which transcends race.

The urban culture of America has found voice in Hip Hop, Gangsta Rap, gangs, and other mediums. Urban Culture has found its way into American, white suburbia. It permeates the lives of all who come in contact with it. It is now "in" to be "ethnic."

Have we realized the assimilations views of past civil rights leaders by not only exposing middle-class America to urban culture, but making it chic, or do we still have a while to go? Is the new struggle one based on economical difference with racial undertones, or is the fight for civil and cultural equality the same one addressed by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X?

In a time where the embracement of ethnic differences and where the intermingling of races had created generations of multi-racial Americans, we have to ask ourselves what culture is with a new outlook to our goals and future aspirations.

RAY SANCHEZ JR. It is always an honor to bring to the table, aka this publication, our dear friend and definitely a major Beat favorite, Ray Sanchez Jr. who has become so appreciated in this office for his non-stop courageous writings, steps up huge to share just that, through his latest commentary and two in your face poems. We do not need to say too much except this young man is serious when it comes to teaching and writing, and we are forever honored to share his words with you all. Ray's first pieces came to us a couple years ago when he was fighting for his life in San Mateo's County Jail. Today, he writes us from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. We must say, we believe in Ray and we can wait for the day he walks in our front door.

Crushed

Not quite wrong, but still far from right
Feeling my woman sleep in my arms
But seeing your face in the night
Markedly uncomfortable, and clumsy when you look
Knowing you more than a pretty cover
In depth, interesting, and intellectual book
Keep it hood, but ain't ghetto
That innocent look could get me in trouble
Don't want to jeopardize our friendship or end this
I'm out of my element
Tongue tied and hypnotized
And that you've noticed I'm sure of it.
Can't leave my boo, and you ain't asked
Feel pulled between the two
Feel my heart as it cracks
When you leave a place you love
Sadness is natural
The saying, "Love Hurts"
Now seems so much more factual
The term "crush" now seems self-evident
My desires for you grind me down into dust
And leaves behind no remnants

When you leave a place you love
Sadness is natural
The saying, "Love Hurts"
Now seems so much more factual
The term "crush" now seems self-evident

Advice

Life ain't no crap shoot
Let me ask you
Have you asked dude
Who that girl was in you ear
As he passed you?
You know me
I'm "E"
From DC
Believe me
I never salt game
Drop names
Or mac greasy
Hey breezy
You's like my family
My faculty, in reality
We's just folkers
You done known me
Since I was a pee-wee
Little smoker
And this, this is serious
Homies done beat you
Plus you missed periods
Can't protect him forever

Can't correct with barretters
He's a boy, you need a man
Yo' child need a father figure
Don't want to cash in perhaps
Just smash him
Give him one of life's lessons
Make him disappear?
Nah.
That was just a suggestion
I'm guessin
You'll remain
Stay faithful, maintain
Attempt to satisfy
At night
Then watch him play games
Playing for chumps and kids
And I'm doing impeccable
Big thangs
Man shhh
An example
A shining sample
Of what's needed
You gotta hunger for love
And I suggest that you feed it.

BRITTANY C.

It is great for us to get this piece that was written and sent to us by our old friend Brittany C. The following three pieces were written late last year and like many pieces they get buried on the pile of the many, many that come our way. With that said, we are so glad we have brought these pieces to light, especially the tragic yet hopeful poem, "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder." We first met Brittany when she was a consistent standout of a writer in our weekly workshops in Alameda County Juvenile Hall. Today she writes from her heart while she completes her program from the CYA's Ventura Youth Correctional Facility in Camarillo, CA.

Just Some Thoughts

If I could take your tears away, I'd make sure you'd remain dry eyed, watching your pain I feel like a puppet on strings, a child along for the ride.

Many mixed emotions consume me when I realize soon you'll be gone, my angel, my all, my shining star, but even stars disappear come dawn.

The Lord is cruel for allowing me to find you only for you to be lost, the price we pay for getting attached, a gut wrenching heart aching cost.

Like Ray Jay, if I had one wish I'd wish you happiness and to have the life you've dreamed of, I pray one day you'll find inner peace and once again come to find true love.

I feel there is a void in you, an emptiness I could never fill, all I can do is the very best I can, and cross my fingers that you'll want me still.

When you hit the gates you won't just evaporate and vanish into thin air, no for there's a lace in my heart for hose I had dear and I'll always keep you there.

If I could dry your eyes long enough to let you see how much I care for you
Maybe, just maybe, you'd take a closer look.... And learn to love me too.

Some More Thoughts

Daddy I'm sorry, I never meant to be so bad, I'm sorry, I'm your little girl, not the boy you wish you had.

I'm sorry for mom leaving us and for her drug addiction too. It's my fault she's gone and I'm sorry she blames you.

I'm sorry Jazzy has bad teeth and we got no money, I'm sorry it's so gray today, if I was good it would be sunny.

I'm sorry we can't get a house 'cause I caused you to use drugs, if I were better we would not be on grandma's carpet, sleeping on rugs.

I'm sorry I made you hit me, I'm sorry I made you lie... but in the real world sorry doesn't cut it. Good thing blames on you not I.

I let you run my life, control let you keep. I let you bring that life to me. I let you rob me of my sleep. Wasn't I good enough? All I ever wanted was love! But when you die I hope you have a good answer when questioned by the Lord above.

Forced, day by day, to relive each moment,
As if it were fresh and new
That's the funny thing about rape
Until it happens,
don't know how it'll affect you.

Hello Beat Readers

Hey, I recently received an excerpt from this new book called "Somebody's Someone," by the incredible (and incredibly strong) woman named Regina Louise. It's all about her life and experience in the foster care system and with her messed up teenage mother. I encourage all those with similar experiences to pick this book up next chance you get or are able to. It touched a soft spot in my heart and has potential to give some insight into your own lives.



Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Trapped in this darkness
No secrets revealed
A lone warrior, the enemy against
But lacking sword to wield.

Nightmares consume my nights
Waking in a sheen of sweat
Shaken up by these nocturnal plights
With demons not even thought up yet.

Forced, day by day, to relive each moment,
As if it were fresh and new
That's the funny thing about rape
Until it happens, don't know how it'll affect you.

Like the homie Woodie
I'm fighting demons in my sleep
Knowin' I need a new found faith
But I can't bring myself to take that leap.

Stolen innocence from a baby
The unforgivable crime
But look, I'm still standing
And I think I'll be just fine!

Time

Time is short
Time is fast
Time is something that hardly last
So what's time when you're doing time?
Plain and simple it's a waste of time!

The Answer

You can't see the color clear and a rainbow is rare
You can't touch a rainbow, but that doesn't mean it's fake
Clear isn't a color, but without it you would suffocate
Soft as a pillow is a cloud so white
Even at night white is the moonlight
It's the color of our flag red, blue, and white.
It's also the color I use to wipe.
Walked on for many years is the color brown
Back in those days yes, but no more now
JFK and Dr. K showed the world it's good to be brown
For being right these men were put underground
Evil wasn't meant to be black
I'm saying this because it's a true fact
Jesus took all of the rainbow and made black
Look hard enough and I am just that
Just as numbers it can start positive and end negative
It can start negative and end positive
You make the choice
But whatever it is do it because it came from your voice.

Is It Positive Or Negative?

A rainbow is so beautiful
But a rainbow is also forgetful
It has all colors I thought was true
All but two times two
White and clear you will not see
Is it because they're invisible, maybe?
What of brown and black?
Why aren't they a part of that?

MARK ABELLA

Mark Abella steps up huge with his first contribution to The Beat Without pages. You can truly feel the stress mounting with each word this talented poet writes in describing the burden of the stress one feels. We do hope this is not the last time we hear from Mark Abella who writes to us from the county jail in Contra Costa County.

Now you pop up like a pimple
unexpectedly
You made it seem like I was
doing the running and hiding
Telling me why you never did
this or that
Was it the truth
or were you lying?

RICH BLACK

Deep off in Contra Costa County's Byron Boys Ranch in Martinez, CA comes Jamar, but for the sake of The Beat, we'll call him Rich Black. He drops four poems on us this week and we liked all four. In his first, a short poem about time and how it's wasted when you're locked up, he gets to the point without beating around the bush. In his second, 'Stranger' we thought he was speaking of a lover until we got to the end and realized he more brilliantly was talking about his absent father. He concludes with two poems about color. One is filled with questions and in the one after he gives the answers. We really appreciate receiving love from him and we hope he feels the same way about us publishing his pieces. By the way, when he wrote this it was a week before his birthday that just past on the 11th. He's 18 now... Happy Birthday from all of us here at The Beat. It's your birthday and yet you're sending us a gift — what a big heart.

Stranger

I know who you are suppose to be but who are you?
I know where you are, but where were you?
Loving you comes naturally just as I love any other stranger
But is a stranger's love for me stronger than the stranger's love that I know?
I went to Texas and met a stranger that I didn't even know.
The stranger said, "It was going to be okay," show me guidance, and love before I had none of this wit' you
I was empty and did what I wanted to do
Now you pop up like a pimple unexpectedly
You made it seem like I was doing the running and hiding
Telling me why you never did this or that
Was it the truth or were you lying?
It was rare to see you during Christmas that was like asking Santa Claus to come see me.
I had gifts from family and other strangers
But from you to me
I'm angry and I'm letting it all out
I didn't tell you sooner, I don't know why
Instead I let time soar through the air and pass us by
I know I'm gonna have to forgive you so I better start now
You weren't there to protect me from danger
But you can come around and stop being a stranger
Because I miss you dad.

Stress

I'm closing my eyes
Palms against my head
Thoughts way out
I'm worried trying to keep my cools.
I'm captured
freedom compromised by fake b-s
lies mix emotions making me sick.
Thinking too hard.
I'm devastated
Stay focus
Stay focus
I express to myself
I'm sensitive emotions fragile
I feel stolen privacy
no longer existing
Where is my redemption
No no no this can't be!
I'm innocent!!!
Deprive from society
Trying to cope with reality
Please God grab me
'cause I'm fallin in
this stressful moment of agony...

R.J. CASTILLO

Wow, we just got finished reading this jaw dropping commentary on criminal law and we're still trying to find the right words to introduce it to all of you. First, let's start off by saying this man is one of our favorite writers, never letting us down as he strokes down the masterpiece of his mind for all of us to see. We're truly grateful to be in the presence of such talent and intelligence. This next piece will definitely make you an R.J. believer if you aren't already one. He challenges the law about how what they're doing isn't rehabilitative and it would be in everyone's best interest to start rehabilitating people. He speaks as if he's thought about it for years. And we agree with most of the things he's saying. It makes sense that someone who's experiencing incarceration would want to wonder why. And maybe not just specifically, but also in the big picture. And when this man looks around and starts asking why, you better watch out because an innovative piece is probably what's coming right after that thought. We can go on and on letting R.J. know how much we enjoy his writing, but we're assuming he already knows. And if you don't already know, he's writing us from DVI State Prison in Tracy, CA. Everyone loves you here at The Beat R.J., so don't forget to stay at us...

Examining Philosophy On Criminal Law

The question I'm proposing is can people, once given a chance to make it in society after being imprisoned and put on parole actually change into a productive citizen?

"What is a productive citizen anyways?" That's what many inmates and parolees are asking. Many don't know how it is to be a law abiding citizen, a patriot, a parent, a businessman, a professional; a skilled laborer, a college student, a high school graduate, or an employee at a job. If these people don't know that these characteristics make up a productive citizen how can we expect to reintegrate into society as one when they weren't even integrated into the realm of society where one is considered a member of that club in the first place.

Here is where legislation has failed to make adequate policy disadvantaged people, specifically those imprisoned and on parole. The premise is based on the assumption that those incarcerated for transgression of a law where once productive citizens and members of normal function and society. The fact is that majority of the prison population were members of the outskirts of society; isolated to the strata of impoverishment and poverty. To suggest to them "rehabilitation" is to restore them to the status of isolation, poverty and disenfranchisement. You cannot rehabilitate someone who does not know what the paradigm of rehabilitation is established upon.

The paradigm of rehabilitation is based upon the philosophy that an inmate/parolee was once a participating citizen of society; fully garnished with the understanding of social law and moral conduct, so as to acknowledge and work for the maintenance and advancement of order and civilization.

If rehabilitation is based upon on this premise what happens to those who never got a chance to be educated, domesticated, civilized and dressed up for the trappings of social function? What happened to the habilitment before the rehabilitation? The current philosophy and paradigm of rehabilitation is faulty for the multi problematic characteristics for the inmate parolee today.

It is apparent that rehabilitation in the minds of the great thinkers, and framers were geared to their fellow of the same class, culture, and social status, but failed to include those of lesser treatment that suffered under the yoke of slavery, colonial oppression, segregation, racism, labor exploitation, close consciousness, and the residual affect thereof.

Many inmate/parolees don't have (nor are afforded) the fundamentals of life, living, coping, and progressive skills to adequately align their minds up with productive thought and decision making. How can they be expected to live to standards of society, when in fact society has been equally hostile to them as they have been to society?

Yes, every man must take responsibility for his/her actions. And society must have the power to punish those who transgress its laws. But the law must be responsible for the actions it produces. For it is by the law that gave man curiosity to transgress it.

Let us look at rehabilitation in the light of the philosophy of the apostle Paul, in regard to law, in the book of Romans Chapter 7 (Note: this is not about religion but philosophy

of law) "What then shall we say? That Law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the Law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the Law had not said, 'You Shall Not Covet.' But sin [natural tendencies] seizing an opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me... I don't understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want but I do the very thing I hate." (New Revised Standard Version; American Bible Society)

Here is the conflict between external, moral pressure and the natural tendencies: when one is raised in a life of crime, societies external, moral pressures are not binding to this mind but are opportunities to arouse transgression. Although the natural intelligence and reasoning agree with the social, moral law, it is the perversion of natural tendencies by the conditioning of transgression that produces conflict toward adjustment and abiding to them laws.

In addition, when a society becomes legalistic (law for every aspect of life) and uses law to enforce responsibility upon individual's responsibility to excuse intelligence and reasoning.

The question is: shouldn't responsibility spring forth from inner convictions and not by enforcement of law? Responsibility must be taught at an early age and then after appealed to by reason and intelligence (persuade). If we think legalism is going to move the individual responsible though external pressure, than you can't expect those who don't respond to pressure (because they don't have anything to threaten loss or confusion) to automatically accept and participate with the productive citizen society. (Please note: I used a biblical concept and philosophy that America based its founding principles and frame works for the constitution where today's laws are based upon)

What then? Do we count all inmates wicked beyond reform? Of course not! This is America we live in, right? We don't think like that — or do we? If we do then we must continue to industrialize the prison population to export incarceration and involuntary servitude. Oops, did I say that? But isn't that what we are doing with laws like three strike and the death penalty? Aren't we telling the world that American citizens are wicked beyond reform? That we lock up (and throw away the key) fellow Americans without giving them a chance and afford them to build a foundation of correct knowledge so their responsibility can spring forth from their inner conviction and not the substitution of external, moral pressure?

Society is being selfish and insensitive to the real issues! Majority of the reason why society has such a negative view on crime is because of unilateral sympathy for the victim and hasty disclusion of thought for the perpetrator. The reactionary response to emotion fogs the open mindedness to use the intelligence to discover the real heart of the matter of crime.

The great thinkers that shape philosophy, social mind set, and eventually law have amnesia to one of the major pillars of civilization advancement: forgiveness for fellow man's transgressions. Forgiveness is the beginning of treatment, healing and stopping the cycle of victimization. Like the law of gravity, there is a law in the psychology of victimization: to be a victim is to want to be victimized — misery loves company. And the only way to stop that cycle is to forgive and afford help.

Many criminals come from victimization of Americas past atrocities and disadvantage-descendants of slaves, colonial oppressors and victimized the social order that was built upon their expense. So they struggle and try to endure hardship; never learning to conform or submit to the conquering powers; thus being ostracized from that order and the realm of normal social function (sometimes people become so high on their perch they let the clouds in thy sky blind their view and vision; distorting their memory of history, or because of selfish reason ignore history completely. Without understanding history we forget where we came from, who we are today, and where we are going tomorrow.) Now, the so called, "productive citizen" will use a reverse psychology to blame the criminal, solely, for his philosophy of destruction without first giving him/her an alternative.

That will really work on solution finding for healing.

continued from previous page

The so-called, "productive citizen" will say: "Come on, it's not about racism anymore. Look, I'm Black, I'm Latino, I'm Asian; I made it!"

And I'll say, "How did you make it? Can you please teach me? Can you please persuade me to want to conform to a country and system that has shown me nothing but struggle and hardship, unfairly? How did you overcome the racism and the feeling of being an inferior to the conqueror? How did you swallow the euphemism to our plight? How can you be so blinded by determination to forget about your peoples continued struggle to overcome? Why did you vote for the three strikes, the death penalty and to do away with affirmative action? Why haven't you used your new position in society to voice our concerns and bring policy to the table that will truly bring healing and solutions?"

Then the productive citizen will say: "you're the one that perpetuates the racism in your own mind, making it difficult for yourself to bring out self-determination to rise up from the destitute of poverty. We live in America, buddy. You know the land of opportunity. Get a grip; get a life!"

Then I'll respond: "Not everyone is an ass kisser or so willingly ready to forget the atrocities and blood shed of the past. Look at your fellow productive citizen's attitude when he or she gets victimized: he or she goes to court, testifies, and goes to board hearings to make sure there is no parole or clemency. He or she will watch and encourage the death penalty, life in prison or long periods of prison time without offering education or a means to reform. Your fellow

productive citizens are not so willingly eager to forget or forgive being a victim. Why should we be so willingly eager to forget or forgive the atrocities and bloodshed of our people's history? Especially when there are no real concrete moves to show the assailants (or their benefactors) are apologetic."

One thing I can I agree on, it's not all about racism anymore — as far as direct racism. It's about the lingering affects of racism, segregation, and colonial oppression, social displacement of conquered subjects of civil and revolutionary war. Does America think that 100 years, 50 years is going to wipe all the bad treatment and bad feelings away? No. It's not that easy; especially when laws are enacted to continue the oppression, bad treatment, and racism through the prison system. If America wants to remain world leader, it better make more serious efforts to reconcile the prison population to the humane treatment of human beings and give then the opportunity to integrate into society for the first time, or our future is doomed.

In conclusion, I would like to say that with the current laws and philosophies on crime and rehabilitation, no, the inmate/parolees will not make it successfully back into society as a productive citizen — at least not in mass production. Because the wall of separation that creates hatred, animosity, resistance, and prejudice continues to marginalize all efforts on all fronts due to the victim mentality and our emotional reaction to want to exact revenge on each other. How we as a people going to march our country ahead of those other countries on our heels for world leadership?

The more I read, I became a addict 'Cause I kept on learning and my mind purified

Trapped

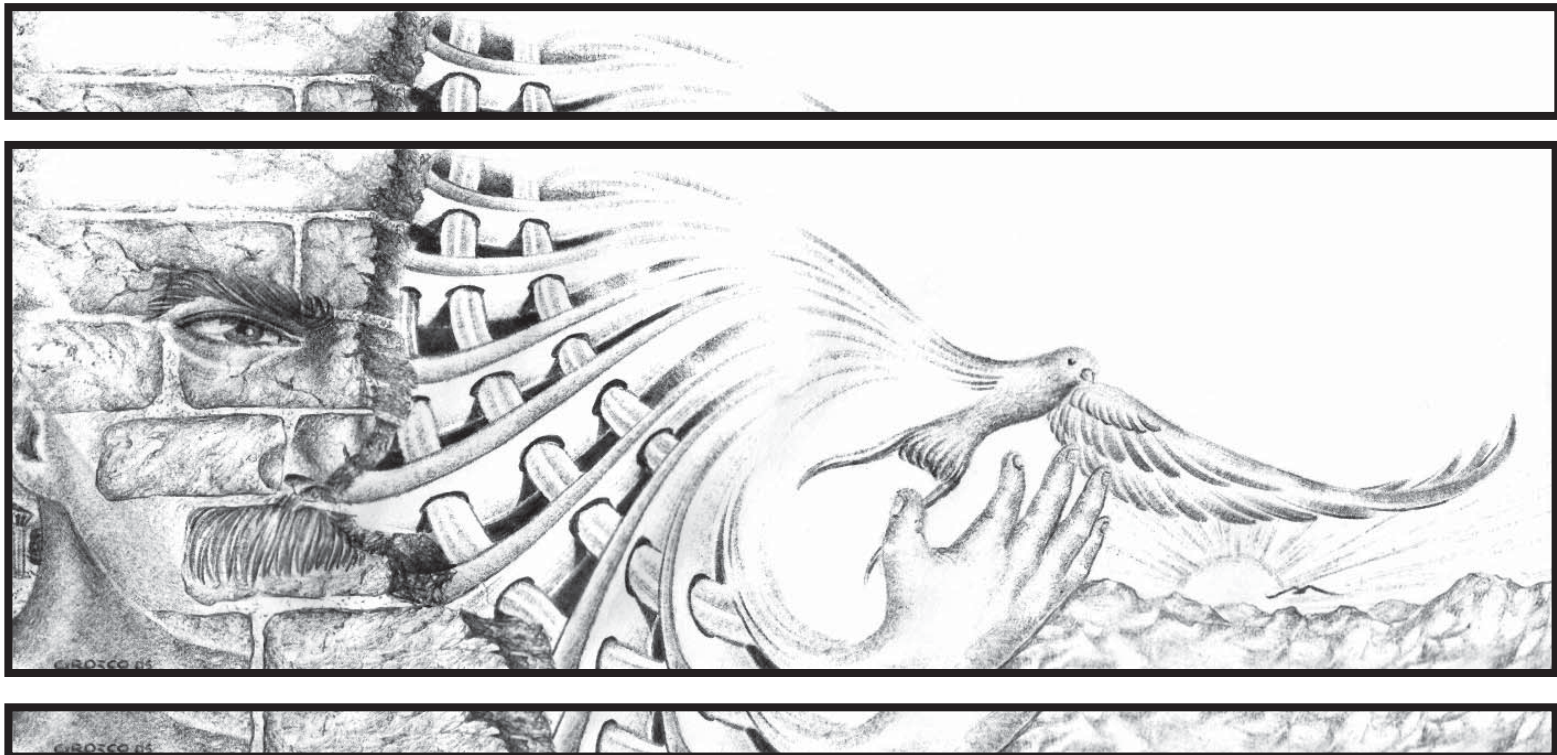
Well here is an awkward situation,
'Cause I was trapped in the 'free world'.
Just blinded by what there is to see,
Some probably read this and say
He's going nuts and how could this be.
I just want to grab your attention for a second
So just relax,
Cause I will give you my outlook
And give you so much details to my facts.
I'm locked up
And this is the happiest I ever been in my life,
So much danger in that 'free world',
Watching my back, selling drugs, and doing things
That's crazy that led to this bid of 25 years to life.
I was out there selling drugs to my own people,
You hear me, my own people,
Not realizing I'm the government's puppet
Stopping the growth of our people.
Not really caring if I see another day.
Shhh with that gun on my hip,
Not hesitating to give my own kind this clip.
Not happy risking my life day to day on the grind
Plus watching my back,
Around dudes that supposed to be my mans,
But in a second will lay you flat.
I come to prison an old timer schooled me
'Cause I was a loose cannon. Just plain off the hook,
He made me face reality. Has me realize
It's much more to life get my mind right and pick up a book.
The more I read, the more tears dropped
'Cause even though I was free, my mind was trapped,
I just thank the higher power I'm in prison
And my body is not outlined, plastic wrapped.
The more I read, I became a addict
'Cause I kept on learning and my mind purified,
Smoking all that dust, popping pills.
Man, I'm the reason my brain was being fried.
Now I understand what the Italians meant when they said,
they was going to college, they meant here,
'Cause the education you get in here is far more advanced

ANOMALY

Without a letter or anything, came a poem to us from the Upstate Correctional Facility in Malone, New York. Yeah, that's right, we said it — New York. As you can see, The Beat is reaching more places than some of us are aware of. And as we're reaching these places, we're realizing that our struggles are virtually the same wherever you go. For some us, it just reiterates the importance of standing together in unity against an enemy more potent than any outside force — ourselves. So as he explains how people can be 'trapped' we can't help but want better for, not only ourselves, but the people around us too. We're glad we're not the only ones who feel like this.

and what the education system don't want you to learn or hear.

I mean it was all-good
The revolutionary movement
And the organizations back in the days
And how they moved that's what's up,
Now we got these fake imitations,
Which supposed to be originals
Break offs going at each other
Except the pigs y'all got it messed up.
I fell victim to all that and yes I could admit,
But the more I learned, the more I wanted to live righteously
and just leave the past behind — I mean all of it.
Freedom is a must and the freedom is in the law library,
But the mind is still trapped,
Y'all fast to play ball with a butt load full of time.
You're nice too,
So you know you're gonna get picked so hurry!
The story is told if you want to hide anything from our
people Just put it in a book,
It took me to be in prison with 25 years to life
Just to pick up a book.
Too blinded by the whips, chicks, diamonds
And all the materialistic that money could bring,
Now I sit here listening to grown men cry every night
It's like a song they sing.
I'm stronger than ever,
Happy and understand and cherish life.
And not once do I feel trapped,
I did at once, but this is the step towards the better of self
And your mind could never be trapped.



I am that kid with a million dreams, that same ghetto kid with no real hope to believe that any of those dreams could actually come true; after all, I am the product of tha ghetto life, tha project seed, I was born on the bloodstained curbs of sidewalks you never see.

check out the rest of William Grajeda's BWO piece on page 42